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COMING OUT;

AND

TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOJI'S SARASWATI MAHAL

THE FIELD OF

THE FORTY FOOTSTEPS.

BY

JANE AND ANNA MARIA PORTER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR

LONGMAN, REES, ORME, BROWN, AND GREEN;

PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1828.

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THE FIELD

OF

THE FORTY FOOTSTEPS;

A ROMANCE

OF

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

BY

MISS JANE PORTER.

———— On their dust
Fresh generations shall renew the tale.
CAULFEILD'S INNOCENTS.

THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOJI'S SARASVATI MAHAL

THE FIELD

OF

THE FORTY FOOTSTEPS.

CHAPTER I.

TWENTY-SEVEN years ago, an old tradition gave the above name to one of the pasture-fields, then in the immediate vicinity of Bloomsbury Square, called the Long Fields, lying between Tottenham-court-road, and a rustic lane, eastward, that ran from the top of Southampton Row, towards Hampstead.

Those fields, then quite open to a view of the distant hills, were accounted remarkably pleasant; and formed delightful rural prospects from the windows of Bedford House, at that time standing, and inhabited by its Duke. Its neighbour,

the Montagues' family-mansion, had long become the British Museum; but, still retaining its noble terrace, overlooking the fields, literary leisure often took its contemplative turn there. Sheep and cows grazed in most of those charming meadows; and they were also the resort of Sunday folk on summer evenings. Hedge-rows divided some, and low palings others, but stiles or gates led into all.

One of those fields (not that which bears the name of the Forty Footsteps) occasionally presented more brilliant shows; being appropriated to the meetings of a society of archers, composed chiefly of young men of high family or connections, calling themselves Toxophilites; who appeared on the days of assembling, as in the times of Robin Hood, in full array of belted green, bow, and quiver, and feathered hat; while the especial ground of their exercise (which lay directly behind the Museum garden) displayed targets, flag-staffs, pavilions, and every other pageantry indispensable to

that memorial of the ancient gallantry of England.

But even that gay commemoration of the past, has become a tradition itself: for what eyes of now departed beauty, then shone on that field!—of youth, and fashion, and splendour! Those brilliant eyes are dimmed or closed. Also the animated young men, who drew the bow in their inspiring presence, where are they? Some sleep in the war-fields of Spain; others have their last bed at Waterloo. Some have crossed and re-crossed seas on errands of public duty; others, "like Ajax, never to return!" While a few—ah, how few! have hung up their manhood's toy over their domestic hearths at home; and talk over their mimic Sherwood with smiles—shall we not say with sighs also?

Field of blameless gaiety! Such, too, was thy purpose in elder days. The lovely gazing eye! the nervous, youthful arm! But, "like leaves of trees the race of man is ever found!" Yet, change as thou mayest, if there be ought in omen,

we may hope, that innocent and happy hearts may still continue to pitch their tent with thee!

But when all the above, twenty-seven years ago, was thus flourishing in its most rural verdure and peopled pleasantness, there existed one tract in that lovely green of meadows, which usually appeared deserted; or, when visited, the human beings discerned there, were few in number, or, most frequently, only some solitary person in musing mood, moving slowly through its long grass. To that, so generally forsaken spot, tradition had given the name of the Field of the Forty Footsteps.

As that field, and all the rest just mentioned, are quickly becoming lost, under the daily extension of London in that direction; before further streets and squares quite obliterate every trace of the awful marks from which it takes its name, one of those *solitary persons*, an old Toxophilite who often trod them, would fain preserve some record of the tale they told, and some description of the local

situation of the spot in which they lay; a spot whose appalling history, while it deterred common wayfarers from making it a path, proved the greater excitement to a few wonder-loving idlers to ramble thither at vacant hours, to pace over and over again, alone or together, in awed contemplation, the mysterious memorials it displayed; and which the finger of a very aged herdsman, the usual narrator of the tradition, pointed out as "the written voice, that crieth against blood from the ground!"

The footsteps were in the middle of the field, and forty in number; and, the old man said, were each imprinted by the approach and struggle of two combatants, who had fought, and perished there, in the dead lock of mutual hatred. The tale brought in many lofty names, long laid low, even then; as we now find their humble historian to be, who died some years ago in Saint Pancras workhouse. But for the pretty orchard-cottage he inhabited, only an easy walk from the field of his legend, and often a place of refresh-

ment for his listeners, no one can trace where it stood. Therefore, before the most material parts which rendered his singular narrative so riveting to attention, be in like manner buried from sight, and swept to oblivion, — every recollection of "the tale he told," that yet survives amongst those listeners, have been sedulously gathered together; and the spot, too, where the fearful event occurred, sought out, and been discovered by a still remaining remnant of its peculiar marks.

Hence the memory of both is attempted to be preserved in the following pages; a striking as well as curious instance of the justice implanted in nature against certain acts, whether the doom be read in the legal records of man, or only recognised by the mental eye, feeling an abhorring consciousness of the presence of evil, that needs not the human tongue to tell us what it is. But, while drawing the particulars of the tradition together, unavoidable circumstances prevented its present narrator

from seeking what might be still traceable of the visible relics of the deep-stamped past, until within a very few months ago; and then a little memorandum, sent by the Toxophilite who first repeated the tale to me, was used as a guide. And, as it answered every wish, it is copied verbatim, for the service of those readers of the story who may conceive a similar curiosity to see the memorable spot, before it can be no more found.

He wrote as follows:

"All I am able to say with regard to the particular situation of the vestiges you enquire after is, that the field they were in lay between our archery-ground (which you may recollect was at the back of the east side of Gower Street) and some other meadows, more to the eastward, that skirted the lane called the Duke of Bedford's Road, then running northward from the top of Southampton Row, Bloomsbury. I remember often walking to the spot in my boyish days, to scan over and over again those extraordinary appear-

ances. The way I went was along Southampton-row, to the point where it led to a passage into Queen's-square. Near that point was a gate and a turn-stile, which opened from the Duke's Road direct into the great extent of fields I speak of, now mostly built on, but then pastures as far as the eye could reach.

"Having entered by the stile, and proceeded thence in an oblique line, at about something more than a quarter of a mile's walking from the stile, I reached the field you mean — that called of the Forty Footsteps; and where the marks, as if of human steps, presented themselves on a continuation of the same oblique line; and in a sort of waving position, giving, certainly, the appearance of a regular advance or retreat of two persons in the manner the legend describes; and, although the grass stood high and rich on all the rest of the field, not a blade grew on the apparent foot-prints.

"To account for them by any other means than the related superstition, was not easy. They did not lie near any

common way; neither do I think that the scanty numbers of the curious or idle, boys or men, who by chance visited the place, could, by their own feet, have worn the marks into such unvarying barrenness of surface. I haunted them repeatedly, both when boy and man, and never saw a change in them. But even were it so, that the visits of the curious had perpetuated the appearances, by retreading in the barren marks, such an admission would prove the fact of a constant tradition respecting them; and that goes far to verify the tale of the tradition itself."

Thus far my correspondent on this head. And then he proceeds to recapitulate in writing what he before had told me in discourse, — the leading heads of the tradition; but which, as they comprise the chief interest of the more extended narrative, I will not, by quoting them here, forestal the impression its larger details may make; I therefore shall conclude my extract with the following further guiding remark:

"I suppose that *the spot in the field where the footsteps lay* must be now *occupied* by some of the *new buildings* about *the north-western angle of Russell Square*; but I have not been on my old haunt these many years!"

These recollections were sent from abroad; and, according to their chart, I set forth one fine sunny morning last April, accompanied by a friend, to explore what traces might yet remain of the field itself. Of the foot-prints, my correspondent had rendered us entirely hopeless. Starting from Bedford Square, and walking up Southampton Row, we struck off at the given point, which, in our guide's time, led directly into the country. Our first step thence was at once into Russell Square. We could not but pause a moment to observe how differently the eye computes distance, when stretching over the free expanse of natural ground, from what it would calculate when that ground is partitioned out into the various obstructing appearances of town. Here, stone pavement,

railed parterre, and fine houses on every side, had completely usurped the place of the pasture fields, with their sheep and kine. The former more extensive rural prospect, spreading to the sky-met hills beyond, was totally excluded. The effect to our eyes of the ground before us seemed of much less extent than as described by our friend; yet he was correct.

We moved on by his compass, and taking the prescribed oblique line across the square, from its south-eastern to its north-western angle, reached the new street called Upper Montague Street. It runs due north from the square; and just athwart its farther extremity, where it is unfinished, we perceived a rough sort of temporary paling, and an openness beyond which promised some vestige of the former country. Calculating that the distance we had walked from the point where the stile had been, must have nearly comprised the stated quarter of a mile, we hastened to the paling to look over; and I may say, to our great delight, be-

held a space that had evidently been part of the Long Fields; a large irregular tract of ground, but sorely disfigured from its described state of pastoral freshness and beauty. Near the paling all was entirely deprived of verdure; lime and other building cements having quite discoloured the surface. And, further on, on every side, the soil was cut up by foundations for houses; and spotted over with heaps of rubbish, bricks, logs of timber, workmen's sheds, and other objects of active masonry.

But, on viewing the yet unbuilt-on space more distinguishingly, we discerned, towards the centre of the quarter nighest to where we stood, and about a stone's throw forward, that the earth retained its vernal sod; being covered there with a short and thick, though scrubby grass; and that it extended in like manner to a pretty considerable stretch of field equally green, excepting on a few barren surfaces of oblong shapes, lying in waving positions on a continuation of the oblique line we had pursued across the ground,

and at regular paces distant, till they were hidden from our further observation by some hurdles and a tool-house: some more paling, also, cut off the field in that direction.

"There they are!" we exclaimed in a breath, while both pointed at the same moment to the last traces of what we verily believed to be the marks we came to seek. After this ejaculation of our delighted surprise, the memory of our absent friend's story connected with them kept us silent for awhile; and we stood gazing on the remnants of that earth-record, as if we could have read there the awful cry "Remember!" once uttered over them.

Though so many years had passed since the terrific scene was acted there, and reason might smile at the acknowledged superstition, yet we shuddered while we looked; and almost considered this last glimpse of these long-perpetuated, but now quickly disappearing, warning foot-prints, as an appeal that they should not be forgotten. Perhaps we

felt it the more from seeing how near they were to being entirely lost to sight, and the conviction, accordingly, that had we delayed our search another month, nay, even another week, every vestige might have been obliterated.

And so it would have been, for on the thirtieth of April, only a few days after we had thus recognised them, the first stone of the New London University was laid, at the north-western extremity of this only remaining remnant of the Long Fields; and in a spot not less belonging to the story of the tradition than the particular field of the memorable marks itself.

On that very spot, where the scaffolding for the new erection now stands, about two centuries ago stood an old family country-seat, with its courts and gardens, and high-pinnacled roof, and turret windows, over-topping a lofty avenue of elms, which led from that side of the mansion into the noted field. But it will be seen the story of that field swept all the rest away; the mansion, and its courts, and

its gardens, as though they had never been ; and the green herbage of the depopulated domain, afterwards called the Long Fields, waved over the site of the whole : the words of Judgment alone remaining, showing where the fearful doom had been sealed.

And now the time is arrived when the mysterious memorial itself shall be as entirely gone ; when the halls and the gardens of the intended great establishment may, even before the first anniversary of its foundation comes round, have effaced every blade of glass from the once awfully-regarded spot, and buried its scathed marks under populous colonnades; colonnades trod by the feet of men seeking honours from wisdom, and wisdom in the school of sound Christianity : else, if such be not the direction of the gates of this temple, the Field of the Forty Footsteps will have been covered in vain.

CHAP. II.

At the period of the tradition, or rather just before, sometime about the years forty and fifty of the seventeenth century, that field formed a lawn-like glade, between lime walks on either side, and was entered from the house by the avenue of elms just mentioned. Its present name had not then been affixed to it; for nothing but scenes of innocent gaiety had passed over its vernal sward. It was the usual play-ground for the boys of the family; and also a kind of gala-green for the servants and near tenantry, on certain merry-makings, allowed, by long custom, by the munificent owners of the mansion; a race well worthy the brave old stem of that De Matchelowe who carried the Black Prince's standard in the day of Crecy, and was cup-bearer to many an expiring foe on the field of that victory.

The household's winter festivities were held under cover, and round the yule-log fire, in the yeoman's audit-hall; for Matchelowe Court was also the manor-house; but the annual holidays we speak of as celebrated on this spot, were May-day, Lammas-tide, and similar summer feasts; and then the whole scene assumed the appearance of a little fair, with booths for refreshment, and garlanded seats beneath the trees, for the pleasant convenience of the aged or other lookers on. The centre of amusement was a high pole, gaily decked with ribands, flowers, and, at night, with lighted painted lanterns, interspersed with glittering implements of husbandry, and some costly appendages from the butler's plate-chamber. It was called the Bloom-Shaft. For centuries it had given that name to the field; and it rose from the midst of the green in all the honest pride of an old English household, flaunting the insignia of its abundant garden, orchard, cellarage, and harvest-home, in the eyes of them for whom the several members laboured; while the

labourers themselves, with careless hearts, took their jocund recreation under the genial skies, which had so blessed the master and the servant.

And nature around seemed to partake the general sense of happy peacefulness; for at that season, when the stars and moon of summer evenings usually shed only the most softly-tempered light, the brighter rays from the Bloom-Shaft, like strange fires shooting amongst the loftiest boughs of the adjacent avenues, might have been expected to scare the rooks from their ancient tenements there; but not so. Every one, in their feathered generation, had been sufficiently accustomed to the regular returns of the revelry below, to be sure that the merry-makers (their joint inheritors of the scene) would not mar the repose of a single wing over head. And it was true; for not a foot in the dance beneath could have been found so insensible of that grateful consciousness to mercy which belongs to a due sense of benefits enjoyed, as to have willingly crushed even one little

worm creeping to its bed through the grass that was their carpet. All within those joyous groups was simple-minded, kindly happiness;—a happiness long remembered and deplored, as the substance of a pleasant dream awakened from by the families of those blameless revellers, those faithful domestics, when they sat together in places — how different! and talked over times, before degrees had changed, and when the poor man knew where to find a shelter, and the rich did not send him empty away.

On those festive nights, the noble owners of the mansion used sometimes to be discerned on the garden terrace that overlooked the gala-scene, strolling slowly, arm in arm, under the calm moonlight of its lime-tree shade, enjoying the pleasure they bestowed. Sir Eustace, and the Lady Aphra de Matchelowe; they were a pair who loved seclusion, yet considered it a duty belonging to their station in life, to spend liberally amongst every order of society. *Encourage industry!* was the axiom of his house.

Employment being a more gracious boon to the poor than alms, by preserving his honest independence, and brightening his pleasure in gratitude. But as there were infirm and aged poor who could not work, for them the same benevolence built alms-houses in the neighbouring village of Lomesbury; and to others, not so helpless, the aids needed were amply bestowed. Sir Eustace de Matchelowe was a just steward of his Divine Master.

In all things, too, he was gracious in his kindness; never forgetting that the same laws of pleasure and of pain govern the hearts of high and low, and that communion in innocent recreations blends the affections of all degrees together. Hence, when the demands of his station called on him to disturb the chosen retirement of his common mode of life, with the pageantries which rank must pay to equitable custom, at those seasons, the former merry-makers round the Bloom-Shaft had the privilege allowed them of being spectators of the festivities of their superiors.

If the entertainment were in the open air, they in their turn took their places on the long terraces which flanked the field of the gentry's sports, then called the Knight's Field (the very same that in our times became the Toxophilite archery ground!*); and as a sufficient attachment still existed amongst all orders of persons in the middle of the seventeenth century, not only to preserve the memorial of the most approved weapon of the ancient British battalia, but also to continue it in the actual war-field, so its practice was maintained with no less zeal than emulation in contest, amongst men of every degree, whether civil or military: for all England were once expert bowmen.

Therefore, when archery was to be the pastime at Matchelowe Court, the Knight's Field was disposed for the purpose with butts, and targets, and bannered pavilions; and the noblest in the land drew together on those festals, to show their skill at the bow, before the embowered galleries filled

* Torrington-square now occupies the site of this archery ground.

with ladies, and making rivalry not only with each other, but against all famous archers, whether they were yeomen, still esteemed the *standard arrows* of every ground, or of that class of citizens chartered anciently by royal licence with right to hold their shooting matches "scarfed and bannered" like the gentry, and with each a title of honour for the day. The latter part of the privilege wiser heads afterwards disused; considering it more a badge for ridicule to shoot at, than as a mark of desirable distinction. And of a truth certain of those titles being bandied in that way, on one of these occasions at Matchelowe Court, gave rise to a spirit the thoughtless speakers thought not of at the time; though it would be well always to recollect, that the smallest spark, when thrown with a mischievous hand, may be enough to kindle an unquenchable fire.

On the day adverted to, some of all the three above-described degrees of archers were assembled at a prize festival, in the Knight's Field of Matchlowe Court.

And on such an occasion it could hardly be otherwise; for although its master's blood was counted as deep in noble channels on the one side as any great lords in the kingdom, some cross-bands, by the marriage of his parents, had connected him on the other side, in near affinity with both the latter quality of persons — "the unscutcheoned orders, except by their company!"

This sarcastic remark was made by one of the contesting nobleman on that day, to a brother peer, on finding his arrow surpassed at the target by that of a young merchant of London, a near kinsman of his host's. The other lord, with smiling contempt, bade him remember the victor burgess was "Duke of Shoreditch by patent of his bow, and noble by courtesy of kindred! Hence he might boldly measure points with the whole college of arms!"

"Neither patent nor blood can ennoble aught of that ditch!" retorted his companion; "and he is a fool who reminds

his guests of the taint in his own blood, by bringing such *canaille* amongst us."

He turned disdainfully from the circle round the target, while speaking; and his compeer, with a no less derisive countenance, followed him. They had spoken in under tones; but the merchant had overheard all; and he did not forget it.

With regard to Sir Eustace de Matchelowe himself on his days of festival, though as good a marksman as the best, he always declined bringing his own bow forth; indeed, whenever he could, he generally avoided public rivalry of any kind with his guests. This retiring taste did not, however, render him the less actively courteous in the task of presiding over the regulations of the contest; nor insensible to the gallant pleasure of dispensing from the fair and timid hands in the gallery where his lady sat, the silver arrows adjudged to the victors; and his countenance showed, on the day referred to, that the most pleasurable sensations he felt, was when, at the conclusion of the contest, he led up the merchant just

noticed, who was his half brother, along with other winners of the same guerdon, most of high birth, and the rest privileged by their bow, to receive the "green archer's meed" from the beloved donor there.

But there were other and rarer occasions, when, according to the feudal tenure of the manor, he was obliged to hold a joust in that field, attended by a train of knights; and then many illustrious foreigners, besides the flower of English noblemen, pressed eagerly for admission to a then seldom-occurring opportunity of distinguishing themselves in that bravest and most admired spectacle. For at that time, though chivalry had become obsolete as a real calling of service, a knight, armed at all points on his full-barbed horse, was still accounted "the goodliest sight in the world!" And from such an exhibition being limited to the prerogative of high birth (nobility alone being capable of the knighthood entitled to the spurs), there always appeared to the raised fancy of the spec-

tators a more than usual air of nobleness about the person so distinguished, when, in his proud accoutrements, he presented himself at the lists. The figure of Sir Eustace was in the prime of manhood; and certainly none shone more eminently the true knight, in any of these commemorations of renowned ancestry, than the feudal Lord of Matchelowe himself.

The last pageantry of the kind that was celebrated at the manor-court, took place on St. George's day, in the year 1641. It was also the baptismal day of Sir Eustace's youngest son, then an infant, and at whose christening their Majesties had declared their wish to stand sponsors in person. The royal Henrietta had become the mother of her own youngest son about the same time that the Lady Aphra de Matchelowe gave birth to hers; and her Majesty being a no less tender parent than the secluded lady, brought her own child with her, to share the morning cradle of her intended god-son.

But when the religious rite was over,

and the King had repaired to the Knight's Field, and the jousts were to begin; when the beautiful Henrietta took her seat there under an open canopy, with her babe smiling and springing in her arms, as if it would leap out amongst the cheering crowd below; and her gentle hostess appeared at her side, holding her infant, too, on her bosom, to which its rosy cheek nestled, as if scared at the acclaim which greeted the entrance of the two fond and lovely mothers—the less courtly spectators on the terraces rent the sky with their shouts. It was a sight that found a chord in every manly breast; proving, that to the great or to the lowly the domestic affections are still the dearest to the heart.

But there are many men who have that in their hearts which shames their manhood. To such, the evidence that those they call "the lofty ones" feel in these respects like common human nature, is rather the discovery of an assailable breach in their strength, than received as a witness on the side of uni-

versal sympathy. And, with regard to those who looked on the new hope and the old honours of Matchelowe Court, some blessed and some frowned at the nursery exhibition. Some of the latter were of the happy father's kin;—persons who, not being qualified to appear otherwise than on foot at that spectacle, felt their pride galled at the idea of standing with the inferiors of his acquaintance; yet not brooking the alternative of remaining away altogether from so novel and glorious an equestrian show, they dared the mortification for the amusement; but, the day over, certain remarks from their compeers on the ground, drew comparisons which made memory bitterness.

It was told, again and again, how the stately-minded Charles—for whom, and the chosen of his court, a royal pavilion had been erected in the east of the field—stood up on the platform when he saw Sir Eustace enter the northern barrier, between his flanking lines of banner-bearers. And how, when the feudatory

rite was to be performed for the two lordships, — one, the domain of Matchelowe, in Middlesex; the other, the barony of Arelby, in Worcestershire; each banner, emblazoned with a coat of the various high descents of the house of Matchelowe in either county, was borne by a man-at arms, and preceded by a sounding trumpet; while the knight himself, leading in his attendant noble guests, all in complete tilting array, scarfed and plumed, he, with his visor up, came forward, mounted on a trained horse; which, as he advanced, loftily bounding into the air, made its heels glisten over the bystanders' heads, till some started aside, and others crouched to the barrier.

There was one, the furred shoulder of whose civic gown being nearly grazed, swore inwardly to himself, "that should never have chance of happening again."

But most others, however displaced for the moment, murmured admiration: and Sir Eustace, having curbed his steed, gave the reins into the hands of his eldest son, then walking by his side, a boy not

more than ten years of age; who took them with a smiling courage, not to be dismayed when the trumpets again re-awakened the mettle of the horse; and he kept them firmly, till he had led the prancing animal to the front of his Majesty's platform.

Sir Eustace dismounted: and while he made the requisite obeisance for his lands, Charles complimented him on the brave grace of his young heir; and ended, by presenting the heron plume from his royal hat to the youthful squire, to wear in his own.

The lists were then opened: and when the noble knight took his position there, with all a father's hopes swelling his bosom with ambition for his son he had never felt for himself, his mien partook the inward exultation; and, as he ran the course with lance and sword, his fine person appearing the least of his chivalric perfections, many of the fairest in the bower-galleries envied the apprehensively shrinking Lady of Matchelowe so gallant a lord; shrewdly conceiving, that it could

not be his choice to live so sequestered a life, whose accomplishments were so amply qualified to be the embellishment of the bravest court, and the grace of its most social hours. The royal stand, too, vociferated its applause of his faultless evolutions; and certain war-scarred, hoary-headed pensioners of his house, who had thronged behind the servants on the terrace, along with other yet humbler maimed veterans who eat their daily bread at his gates, whispered to each other the kindling of their soldier hearts, till the half-smothered plaudits went round like the sweeping rise and rushing of a sudden wind.

A few, indeed, muttered to their nearest neighbour—"We remember the days of his lady-mother's family here! Days of her father's real prowess! Days, which won the long times of peace, which have left good Sir Eustace no use for that brave sword but this gallant sport!"

And the speakers wistfully regretted their own departed youth, and hard-fought fields by the old baron's side; at

the very moment, too, when age and infirmities, pressing heaviest on themselves, called most determinately for rest to their wounded limbs. And the recollection, for they had only to move to be reminded of it, soon made them ready to again bless Heaven for this noblest lord; who, in general, withdrawing from the gauds of courts, the mimickry of fields, and the clamours of state disputations, so liberally shared the calm enjoyments of his peaceful life, with all whose less-gifted cup required to be filled or sweetened at his board.

But, as has been said, there were those there whose gall of aconite no cup of his could ever sweeten.

CHAP. III.

It well accorded with the spirit of the murmurers, in the bright and equable days we have described, when those peaceful and gaily gallant times, unmolesting and joyous to high and low, were drawing to an end; when repletion became satiated; when the rich longed to become noble, and the noble could not submit his neck to the domination of royalty; when royalty sometimes forgot that the laws were its superior, and justice became hidden, no one knew where.

Then, the heretofore happy people of the nation, — happy in the simple homes of unpretending comfort, — quickly found themselves disturbed by one or other of the discontented, loudly-disputing parties; and their quiet thresholds being at last crossed, and their domains invaded,

to make room for harsher arguments than words, the natural effect ensued. In mere self-defence, all persons rallied on one side or other, till England became a not less absurd than terrific spectacle; raising bulwarks against itself, and pulling down every revered memorial of former national greatness.

And all this came upon many of the untroubling, contented, country-abiding gentry of the land, as it did upon the inhabitants of Matchelowe Court, like a thief in the night; with amazement and consternation in its train, commanding their unresisting submission to whatever might befall.

But the latent mischief did not break out till some time after Sir Eustace had left his home for a long journey through the Netherlands into Germany, and, if need presented, for a vast circuit beyond. Little emulous as he had ever been of occasions to take him, even on the proudest errands, from the bosom of his family; and diffident as he was of his talents being equal to fulfilling any such

important trusts, he was indeed gone on a private embassy from his sovereign throughout all those countries: and he had been urged to it by the strong remonstrance of his sovereign, more particularly on account of its being on a plan of newly-projected treaties relating to the interests of the great chartered Company of Merchant Adventurers, to which his paternal brother, Geoffrey Baldry, belonged (the before-mentioned citizen victor at the target); who, after the tournament-exhibition of his kinsman's high place in the royal favour, had persuaded him, by every argument connected with their fraternal relationship, to subdue his natural repugnance to interfere with public concerns, and to solicit of the king's wisdom (grounded on the reasons Geoffrey gave him to advance) the appointing of a secret mission, on the desired points, in behalf of the Great Merchant Company. And that being not only acceded to by the gracious Charles, but the execution of so momentous a task, proposed by him to

the knight himself; Sir Eustace, on the same principle which had overpowered his constitutional diffidence in the first instance, gave his brother the advantage, that conquered him in the second: and Matchelowe Court, for a time, was left without its protector.

That time, however, was sufficiently prolonged, by one traversing circumstance and then another, to carry him so far beyond reach of any news from England, while such incredible changes were taking place there, that he never heard a word of what had happened, until he found that his own return thither was no longer in his power; and that the hand of lawless oppression had come close to his own doors.

In short, when the most notorious leaders of the newly-assembled parliament, arrogated to themselves the full domination of the government of England, to the exclusion of any deference to the royal prerogative, they came to the resolution of fortifying London against the return of the King; who had

found himself obliged to retire awhile, from the insults he had received, into the north, under a hope that negotiation with those proud spirits might bring them to some more reasonable terms with their hereditary sovereign. But the reverse ensued. His adherents were declared enemies to the commonweal. If abroad, they were denounced too dangerous for readmission to their country; and those at home were rated at once as foes, to be repelled wherever they presented themselves in the King's name.

Hence, no time was to be lost in making London, the very heart whence all these issues were to ensue, a secure fortress for the promulgation of the novel order of things. And the engineers employed obeyed the decree with true revolutionary despatch, carrying their field-works up from behind the Tower, east, towards Shore-ditch, north, which they turned; and, thence run their lines westward, without stop or stay, across by Islington; and, traversing Lamb's-Conduit Common, raised their most con-

siderable bastioned battery northward, immediately in the rear of the gardens of Bedford House; a then recently-erected nobleman's mansion, and the nearest in neighbourhood to the domain of Matchelowe Court; a large continuation of common being the only division between the newly-planted shrubberies on the light-arcaded terraces of this most elegant specimen of Inigo Jones's art, and the massy buttressed walls of the old feudal territory.

A superbly-wrought high iron gate opened from the lime-vista of the Bloom-Shaft field, on to that common. But the main entrance to the manor house of Matchelowe, from the side of the town, as the road lay through the village of Lomesbury, was by an immense Anglo-Norman archway, containing huge oaken folding-gates, and surmounted by trophies, with the coat-armour of the family in stone. It stood where the British Museum now stands, and led to the grand avenue of the domain, with its thick copse-woods on each side; till, after compassing the

left barrier of the Knight's Field, it conducted straight to the terraced lawns and groves of rarer foliage, immediately surrounding the habitation.

The Earl of Bedford, being one of the most important supporters of the new measures, his abode was taken within the protection of the plan of fortification. But while the battery there was completing, and which, on the right, had nothing to intercept its sweep of the country towards the northern road, the engineers considered that the woods of Matchelowe, towards its left, might prove not only an inconvenient obstruction to observation, but a dangerous screen for an enemy; and though the stately pinnacles of the old manor-court were seen overtopping their coeval trees, as if pleading the law of premunire for their preservation, the word was instantly given to level them.

Great was the consternation amongst the long-attached domestics of the mansion, when the order was unceremoniously brought to the gates by the very men

who were sent to execute it. It was carried, with an aspect of mute dismay in the countenance of the servant who presented it, to the then melancholy secluded Lady of De Matchelowe.

In vain she attempted to remonstrate with those who had authorized so despotic a stretch of power. In vain she besought the officer who headed the commissioned party, to spare any one of those time-hallowed groves, which for centuries had formed a paternal mantle round the hereditary home of her children, more venerated by her than any heraldic honour could bestow. Hard silence was all the answer she received, and the men proceeded to their business.

The axe was laid to the roots of the elm-avenue first, and its huge umbrageous trunks fell with a weight to the ground, that shook the foundation of the ancient house they had so long protected and adorned, through all the vaults of its vast cellarage. The dogs ran out from their kennels at the stunning noise, howling rather than barking. The chil-

dren of the servants followed, on hearing the cry of their favourite rooks; who, rushing in a terrified body forth from the falling branches, wheeled and wheeled for a few seconds, like a darkening whirlwind in the air, over their prostrate dwellings; and then, as the last perishing twitter seemed to issue from each crushing nest that held their unfledged young, the parent birds gave one frightful simultaneous scream, and soared away far beyond sight; as if to tell the story of their depopulation to him whose guardian arm was no longer over them, nor his own unprotected brood.

The household children ran in sobbing, to complain to their lady of what had been done to the rookery; and they found her weeping over the head of her own young son, too sensible of such a foretoken of the coming evils to them, and to all under that too surely-devoted roof. The poor little creatures, some of whose parents had hastened in to withdraw them from such strange intrusion, were mingling their louder sympathies

with the silent tears of the mistress, when Geoffroy entered, and with him Leonard Baldry, another half-brother of her husband.

How they came to be so related to him, we proceed to explain: —

Sir Eustace de Matchelowe was the youngest son of Philip Baldry, merchant of London, by his second wife, the Lady Eustacia de Matchelowe. She had been bequeathed to his guardianship by her father, Sir Arthur de Matchelowe, Baron of Arelby; who, having met the merchant while on their respective pursuits in the East, joined his company; and, in the course of travelling, the English knight conceived so great a friendship for the London merchant, that some years after, when he returned to England (whence sorrow on becoming suddenly a widower had driven him), he renewed the intimacy; and on his own death drawing nigh, he thought he could not do better for his young orphan heiress, then scarcely thirteen, than commit her to the sole care of his esteemed friend, the

most respected citizen of the most respected metropolis in the world, and to the maternal example of his accomplished and exemplary wife.

Such was her character, and most thoroughly she deserved it, being a woman of a munificent as well as a magnificent spirit, well suiting the splendid taste which pervaded every action of her husband. The whole East, nay it may be said the whole commercial world, lavished its various commodities to the establishment of the lustre of his distinguished name; and being the largest proprietor of the ships belonging to the rich Company of Merchant Adventurers, bringing home wealth from every quarter of the globe, he naturally took the lead in all their discussions; and of gradual consequence became so entirely their acknowledged director, that on the English Exchange he was universally distinguished by the exclusive title of *The President.* None envied him the pre-eminence, for he made it the interest of every man to support his influence. In every way he

sustained the dignity conferred on him, with elevation of principle in mercantile transactions; and when those were with foreigners, his conduct was so liberal, and his reception of their agents so nobly hospitable, that he acquired with them a second appellation — *The British Cosmo.*

This compliment was so peculiarly gratifying to the princely taste of the President, that he was near giving the Florentine name to his eldest son; but his more plain English wife, perhaps more sensibly too, persuaded him rather to christen the boy Geoffrey, after her father, Geoffrey Maurice, a citizen only second to himself in riches and the city's reverence.

That boy and Leonard, his junior, were the only children the merchant had by this judicious lady. And Geoffrey, the eldest, was just turned of six years, and his brother half that age, when the young Eustacia was brought into the family.

The President's mansion stood on the north side of West Cheap, and occupied a space of ground now the site of

many other habitations. Courts were within courts, the caravansaries of merchandise, whose heaped-up chambers bore the names of the especial countries from whence their stores came; but the dwelling-house formed the front quadrangle, and there the proudest palaces of the nobility east of Temple Bar, could not have vied with its costly splendour.

To this mansion of civic grandeur, the young orphan was taken on the death of her father, from her own paternal old oaken-pannelled home of Matchelowe Court; and the matron benevolence of the great citizen's wife received her as another child. The boys greeted the little heiress as a welcome playfellow; for though she had passed her thirteenth year, she was so fairy-like in her proportions, yet so intelligently beautiful, that, on first beholding her, persons were at a loss to guess whether it were a lovely child they saw, gifted with the graces of premature symmetry; or, indeed, a youthful creature approaching to womanhood, yet so delicate, so small, and with such ex-

quisite transparency of complexion, and lightness of motion, that she seemed ready to melt into fine air whenever she moved.

She caressed the children fondly, and dried the frequent tears for her orphan state, whenever they clung round her ivory neck, and kissed her like infant brothers. Their mother soon loved her for these winning tendernesses, as if she had been indeed her daughter, and she cherished her accordingly. But the first year of Eustacia's mourning for her father was hardly completed, ere she had to lament the sudden death of this other, almost parent. And such are the extraordinary events of this life, the President barely allowed the prescribed twelvemonths of his weed-clad respect for her memory to elapse, before, so great was his influence over the young and timid mind of his innocent charge, that, to the amazement of all who knew him, he married her.

By this act he became master of her large landed property, both in Middlesex and Worcestershire; for, "on her mar-

riage, be it at whatever age, if her choice received the consent of her worshipful trustee, Philip Baldry, her husband was to come into full command of all her possessions." So the will of her brave and noble father devised it; though certainly he never meditated that this husband was to be the man, equal to himself in years, to whom he had bequeathed his beloved child, to be the guardian of her early youth; and her protector, when more advanced, from the rapacious hunter of such highly-portioned female orphans. But the event was even such a fate: and assuredly, ere the anniversary of that nuptial-day returned and expired, the young bride was laid by the side of her father in the family burial-place at Castle Arelby.

It was her last request that it should be so, even in the hour when, as the sole representative of her youth and innocence untimely cropt, and of his name and honours, she left a son. And when her dying eyes looked from the bed on which she had just given him birth, to-

wards her silent aghast husband, she said to him, "Let my child be called Arthur, and bury me by my father!" Her face fell on the babe while she spoke, and Eustacia de Matchelowe never looked up again in mortal life.

The President did mourn, year after year, that young bride; for youth and beauty, and wedded nobility, went with her into the grave. And he loved her too, passionately, tenderly; but he had also loved, with a husband's fondest affection, the mother of his two eldest boys; yet he had closed her eyes with his own raining down tears, and on the morrow smiled, with the conviction of what his vanity and his ambition might compass by securing the hand of her adopted daughter. The result has been given; and the bright fruit having been snatched from the tree and made a hasty banquet of, the ashes were left on his lip for the future years of all his earthly existence.

Eustacia had borne her son in Matchelowe Court, because her child, male or

female, was to be the inheritor of that place, with its name, as the patrimonial cognizance of the inheritance. Hence, the President from that day made the manor-house his almost stationary residence, dedicating the chief of his time to the careful rearing of his infant son, whom he named, in the vehement impulse of his agonized sorrow, rather after his own will than the last wish of the wife he mourned. He called the child Eustace; and there were some around him who whispered to the half-brothers of the infant heir, that their father had named him so, not only because it reminded himself of the lovely young creature, now no more, but because it kept alive in the memories of his acquaintance, that the mother of the boy had been the *Lady Eustacia.*

The President's sons by his first wife were educated at his house in West Cheap, under the charge of tutors qualified to teach them all the acquirements of gentlemen, which might not interfere with their respective intended occupations in life; Geoffrey to be his father's effective

coadjutor in the presidentship, and ultimate successor in all his commercial property; Leonard to be comptroller of the vast water-works and mercantile quays in the neighbourhood of London-bridge, all of which he was to share, when he came of age, with his brother; having been the fortune of their mother, devised by her father, the industrious and wealthy speculator, Maurice. Geoffrey Baldry honoured the example of both grandfather and father; and while he was distinguished in the city as one of its comeliest and most accomplished youths, in all the manly sports and courtesies of demeanor attached to his age and degree, he was no less considered an example of attention to business; and the subsequent confidence bestowed upon him by the worshipful Company of Merchant Adventurers, of which he, as the eldest son of their President, became a member, finally acquired him the same high seat over them, and, as such, constituted him really the most powerful man in the city.

But Leonard fell in with ill company

early; he was of a jovial and independent disposition: and his father, his natural guardian through the quicksands of so dangerous a temperament, having consigned him entirely to the guidance of hired preceptors, the boy spurned their control, and associating himself with spirits as self-willed as his own, but who, whether of "gentle or burgess blood," not possessing so ample a bank for a careless spender to lay hand on in the gratification of every headlong wish, he, too, became a mighty man in the city; for the sons of lords who held dwellings there were seen to doff their feathers to his purse-strings when by the side of a dice-box; and there was not a tavern from Temple Bar to the Tower Wharf that did not fling open its doors to welcome the gay and free-paying Leonard Baldry; and, besides, there were a chain of wine-cellars, of a less creditable character, which all knew him to be the *incognito* chief of the whole array of the London apprentices; a self-organized body corporate, who kept all London in awe by

their nightly exploits, whether of mirth or mischief, according to the whim of the hour.

But more of them anon in their place. For the present, we return to their occasional leader, and to his brother.

Geoffrey was a person of lofty port and urbane aspect, like his mother; but his eye did not possess her open frankness. Leonard resembled his father, whose figure was not less commanding than his eldest son's; but it showed more athletic activity; and in that, Leonard more than equalled him, or, indeed, any man of his own associates: he also possessed his father's singularly-handsome face, perhaps with something less of refinement, and a complexion more sanguine; with eyes that might have been painted for those of a young Bacchus, not in the swimming expression of a half-drowsy midnight revel, but full of the fire of the grape; such as the vine-crowned god might have been expected to have looked when he turned his lion-reins from gazing on the burning skies of India, to bring some of their

beams to ripen the cold vineyards of the north.

With regard to the youngest brother of these two, his person and dispositions have already been described in the character of Sir Eustace de Matchelowe; and in the self-same day of his coming of age, when his father invested him with the patrimony of his mother, and her titles with it, he added to himself the more precious gift of a fondly-attached sharer in them all. The Lady Aphra Carey; the only sister of the brave Lord Falkland, who had become his acquaintance at the royal equestrian school, where both the young men went to learn and practise all the gallant exercises of the horse peculiarly befitting their hereditary rank; and forming a mutual friendship there, Eustace cemented it more firmly in their social meetings under his new friend's family roof; where frequently enjoying the presence of Falkland's only sister, a sweet girl, beautiful, amiable, and of the simplest wishes, noble and en-

dearing, like his own, the young knight loved, won, and married her.

But Sir Eustace still remained the dutiful and submissive son; conducting himself as if he were his father's guest, rather than his father his; for the affectionate parent had entirely relinquished his commercial business, all but the title of its President, to his eldest son; and put his second in possession of his moiety of his mother's dowry, with the duties annexed to it. Meanwhile, the old merchant following the quiet pursuits of an always elegant literary taste, in the chosen retirement of Matchelowe Court, habit as well as natural bias bred the same predilections in his youngest son; and the choice of the gentle daughter he brought to him, with the birth of a warmly-greeted grandchild within the first year of their marriage, bound the little circle yet more delightfully to their domestic shades.

The President with a swelling heart on the birth of this infant heir, remembered the last similar scene to which he was summoned, but which had terminated

so differently for the beloved mother,—and he named the child Arthur.

He lived to suffer terrors, too, for the breaking up of his best of son's domestic comfort; for the Lady Aphra had nearly died in two successive confinements after this propitious commencement; and none other of her subsequent children survived until the lapse of a few years brought better fortune in the rearing of an infant, whose christening the presence of royalty had distinguished; but the anxious grandsire had paid the debt of nature himself, in the autumn of the year preceding that in which he would have so proudly greeted a monarch standing sponsor for his grandchild.

For, notwithstanding the wild courses of his own youngest son had compelled tales to his ear, fraught with anguished self-upbraidings for having abandoned to others the reins he ought to have held over the perilous passions of that boy's early youth; and though Geoffrey, prudent and respected as he was, conducted himself to the paternal authority more

like a scrupulously-just partner in trade than a duteously-accountant son; though the father's heart felt the alienation of both these sons from him, and also blamed his own neglectful partiality to their youngest brother, as the primary cause; neither was his parental conscience sufficiently awakened, nor his idol-ambitions sufficiently sated, or found empty, to render him insensible to the trappings of the world's mere gauds, which a wise man might have considered such a dignity.

Geoffrey was present at that solemnity, in the high civic mantle of successor to Philip Baldry, as president of the great company of Merchant-Adventurers; and as such he took his place: but his father, in quality of paternal ancestor to the noble child so honoured, though not himself noble by his own birth, would have had a distinguished chair amongst the illustrious seated spectators; while Geoffrey Baldry, having no claim in blood, to one drop of the De Matchelowes in his veins, where they sat with the king and court in feudal pomp, the best citi-

zen of London could only be allowed standing-room,—and that citizen was the uncle of the child.

Geoffrey ill brooked the distinction then; and, from the first, his spirit had ever risen against his youngest brother's pre-eminence; for his father's ambitions were all brooded again in his eldest son's breast, and he would have taken aim high enough to have followed his father's career in every way, had the opportunity offered: but such a golden fortune, with splendid station in its train, not coming every day within the eye-point of a citizen's bow, Geoffrey first believed he despised the height he could not reach; and, secondly, at the close of the year in which Eustace had led the daughter of a British Earl to minister to the growing infirmities of his aged parent, in the favourite seclusion to which he brought her, Geoffrey conducted a less illustrious, but not less lovely and amply-portioned bride, to his paternal mansion in West Cheap; where, both before and after the death of his father, he continued to abide with all

the georgeous parade which wealth could command or civic honours give him claim to arrogate: and so he shone the second Cosmo, the merchant-prince of his line, till, passing westward, he sometimes found his beams shorn, when certain circumstances brought him within the precincts of that court, which his pride would never have measured with himself, had he not had a brother who occasionally blazed in its distinctions; distinctions which that brother seemed as little inflated with as by the gentle air he always breathed; but to Geoffrey they were like the infatuating flame to the ever-attracted creature of another element, scorching the ambitious wing, that hovering could not enter and live.

The laws of high birth barred him out; but the laws fell, and the bar with it; and the object of the desire was vanished away, or then become as nothing: for what every man may possess, loses value in the sight of all; and that power was deemed common with the herd, which did not make itself felt by the owner, and

recognised by the submission of those under its influence, whether by the overthrow of a state, or the cutting down of a tree. Such were the mood of the many round Matchelowe Court, when Lady Aphra sat there in her tears, and her two brothers-in-law, Geoffrey and Leonard, entered to her.

CHAP. IV.

The brothers did not arrive together, neither did they enter together. Geoffrey had come on his sister-in-law's summons; and the moment he alighted from his horse at a postern door in the court-yard, he hastened into the house. Leonard's errand was only one of those accidental visits, which, as he had been in the habit of making the like on his own particular occasions to his brother, Sir Eustace, he now sometimes repeated to his lonely lady in his absence; but, and that to his honour, not on the same motives which had so often led him to her husband's private ear.

On his approaching Matchelowe Court this day, and seeing the devastation from the great gateway to the mansion terrace, he first laid his heavy whip on the back of the trench-master, who stood in com-

mand on the latter spot, and then, with as weighty a ban, ordered him and his myrmidons off from within musket-shot of the windows of his sister's house.

The man, once a boon companion of the wrathful speaker, took the blow in good part, from a hand which had never been slack in dispensing to him favours of a different description; and the instant recollection of the many merry hours they had passed together, made the stricken officer look up laughing, while the angry Leonard rode furiously on; and, rubbing his shoulder, he declared to his wondering pioneers, "that Master Baldry deserved a little patience in his cups, who was never a niggard in filling others to the brim! — So," continued he, "while the wine is in him, I shall march you back to the Checquers in Lomesbury, to drink to his health, and confusion to the cavalier over the water!"

During this short parley and its consequences, Geoffrey had made his entrance into the desolated presence of the

Lady Aphra; and she began pouring out to him, her beloved husband's trusted brother, her consternations, her apprehensions, and her indignation, at the treatment she was receiving in his absence.

"Alas!" cried she, "he that is even now serving his country on the mission that took him from my side! Is this a moment to so cruelly molest his family? — to despoil the home of his noble forefathers, ever the first defenders of their country, from generation to generation! And by whom is it thus laid bare to the rudest ingress? By a band of self-authorized men, calling themselves the government of England; but who have so little of the English gentleman in their breasts, that they refused even to hear the remonstrance I sent, praying, in just respect of my absent lord, some exemption from the wide ruin you see! Oh, my brother, are these the persons you have spoken so honourably of?"

The poor lady, after this agitated appeal, and exhausted by the emotions of

her just resentment, sunk down into her seat, and dissolved again into the tears natural to her meeker nature.

Geoffrey, taking a place by her, soothingly assured her that the committee of defence were selected from the best patriots in the parliament of England; and, in the main, were precisely such persons as those from whom the illustrious forefathers she described had derived their distinguished birth-rights.

"Think of Runnimede, my noble sister!" said he, "and have candour for our barons of the present crisis!"

"Not forgetting Wat Tyler, Jack Cade, and other Jacks of the straw and hemp to boot!" ejaculated Leonard, who had entered the room, while his brother was speaking. "I wish I had the hanging of such Magna Charta fellows, whose first feat is against a woman!"

Lady Aphra looked up; and the sweet glance of her weeping eyes, though her voice could not, thanked this wild brother for his rough sympathy. Geoffrey scowled on him for a moment, but clearing his

brow the next instant with a placid smile, recommenced his task of reconciling their disconsolate sister to the present measures. The attempt, however, was vain, and while in silence, and tears yet trickling down her cheeks, she sat resignedly listening, as if gazing down upon her child who had fallen asleep on the couch by her side, Leonard threw himself into a chair at some distance; and, thoughtless of the little slumberer, was running his glittering rowels along the burnished oak of the floor as if spurring the very house to rise and overwhelm its depredators; he clenched his teeth, and every now and then cast a look of reproachful scorn from his flashing eyes upon the bending head of his elder brother, who was closely applying his subtlest arguments to persuade her, would she but have patience, and not spread her own alarm over sea to bring her husband into suspicion, all must end happily for her and hers; and, with that remark, he avowed himself far from approving every proceeding that the patriotic zeal of the

men in authority had precipitated them to adopt.

"But," he said, and in a tone with something like menace mingled with its intended dignity, "they, and all who think they have influence with them, ought to know their own interest too well to give serious offence on any grounds to me!"

He followed this declaration with the acknowledgment that they had deemed it necessary to cut down the woods of Matchelowe Court; and he did not interfere, because it became him to set an example of public virtue, in showing no deference to a man's own family when the commonweal demanded sacrifice.

"Yet," added he, "the parliament of England are disposed to respect the sister-in-law of Geoffrey Baldry, on firmer principles than old parchment records, concerning great lords, buried ages ago! A sort of reversionary property," observed he, with a smile, "that has nothing sterling in it in times like these, when personal qualities, with power derived

thence, are the sum total to be depended on; when, indeed, man is measured against man — the only respectable standard, after all." And he rose with a stately wave of his head, and another smile, as if conscious of the excellence he described.

Lady Aphra then found voice to reply.

"Oh! if such be the fact," cried she, "would my husband lack aught in such a measure? But, alas! he is not here to speak for his own. Even my brave-hearted boy, who, young as he is, would have forced these men to hear his father's son plead for his rights; for is there not law in England for the nobleman's rights, as much as for the lowest commoner, for whom ye proclaim all this evil to be done? But he, even he, was taken from me to go on that ill-fated journey; and I and this helpless babe are left alone." And she sobbed convulsively, while she pressed the mutely-gazing, just-awaked little creature close to her breast.

This unexpected vehemence, in the retort of one usually so mild, surprised Geoffrey; who, indeed, had rather meant

the most arrogating part of his speech for another ear. And that other listened with his own unuttered commentaries, inwardly measuring their relative positions on the proud standard so challengingly put before him. One moment he was ready to burst into loud derision at both pretensions; and in the next, he shook his thick locks, and marvelled Geoffrey's tongue did not blister, while naming himself and their brother Eustace in a breath.

He had again taken up the soothing strain to his agitated sister-in-law; beseeching her to distinguish between respect to prejudices and to real honour. "My brother, your husband," continued he, "possesses every claim to the latter, in his own person. Therefore, forbear disparaging him thus, by bringing forward a species of claim in your complaints, which himself would despise! I am here! His representative in his absence. And I am Geoffrey Baldry besides; the city heir of Sir Eustace's father!" added he with a lofty smile; "and I pledge you

my word, Lady Aphra, that neither my brother's wife, nor any of her household, showing the proper respect to the existing authorities, shall meet with the smallest molestation from their necessary officers; therefore, sweet sister, be comforted."

"Yes!" cried Leonard, coming forward, who had started from his chair, and been striding the room in contemptuous carelessness, during the latter part of Geoffrey's discourse, "be comforted! the fellows of your great qualities, in authority yonder, declare they sit there to protect the weak against the strong. So now that they have broken down your fences to bring you within pale of their justice, you have every right to demand its shield. But should you find it otherwise, and they step one foot beyond that they have done, Geoffrey knows, my fair sister, that I am an heir of the city too: President Lackland over as pretty a band as he can turn out east of Ludgate. Only send your next remonstrance to me, and I will bring you a guard over the good cellars of Matchelowe Court, which no

Act of Parliament, nor Common Council, shall put down, while Leonard Baldry has an eye to choose between kin and kind."

Lady Aphra again thanked him, by an agitated smile beaming through her tears. And she gratefully thanked Geoffrey too; while both brothers bending to her, each took a hand of hers. The younger pressed that he held to his lips; and muttered over it his oath, to be a true man to the wife of his best brother. Geoffrey repeated also his more intelligible promises, of keeping her and hers in perfect personal security till the return of her husband, and her eldest son with him, should have extinguished every cause of suspicion and alarm concerning them; and then stooping down, he kissed the child, calling it his "darling little nephew."

The young Henry was then playing with the glittering dagger-hilt of his uncle Leonard; who, perhaps, from not being a married man, and consequently not a father (now Geoffry was both), had little

sympathies with a child; and only clapping the boy on the head, with a kindly laugh bade him not meddle with edged tools, lest by and by he should have more of them than he could well stomach. "A lot too likely to be my own share," cried he, "for fingering such gew-gaws rather than my ledger."

A few minutes afterwards the re-assured mother of the pleased child saw both its uncles withdraw; and when they had ridden away, she summoned her domestics into the gallery that adjoined her apartment; where, communicating to them the comfort she had received herself, they blessed the tidings; and all retired exulting in her cause of hope — the expectation of soon seeing again their honoured master.

CHAP. V.

But time rolled on, and events crowded on each other, which caused the gates of the still-revered dwelling-place of the De Matchelowes to open and shut fearfully and cautiously; for many were the anxious and the stranger faces which at divers times knocked at the massy portal.

A strong redoubt, too, had been cast up to the north-east of the domain, taking it into the line of defence; with a trench and breastwork, stretching from the great bastion or hornwork to the redoubt; and so the whole was secured from any hostile access by the north.

Immediately to the west of these new out-works extended the field of the Bloom-Shaft; and their shadows at night lay over it, then a wide, disused space, overgrown with high unmown grass all the way between the bank of the trench and the base

of the treeless lawn-terrace, which spread before the stately-turreted windows on that side of the house. A low postern from the redoubt opened into the field; but as the key was always in charge of the officer of the guard, when any were deemed necessary there, the privacy of that quarter of the domain was seldom disturbed.

Indeed, that field had then become as singularly solitary and silent, as formerly it had been the celebrated scene of the most populous mirth: the May-pole, which, in the days of its chaplet-gaiety, had changed the name of the neighbouring village from Lomesbury to Bloomsbury, still, indeed, remained; but it was bare! not even a withered garland hung on it; and it stood in more ghastly mockery of the past, from its sapless and shroudless stem having survived—like a mummy of Egypt — the glorious avenue, its compeers, which, in full vernal umbrage had so long chequered the moonlight shade of generation after generation, who had danced there their merry rounds.

But no merry hearts had been to revel on that spot since the evening of the memorable day of the joust in the Knight's Field, when the royal visitants to both had stamped such dangerous distinction on the host so honoured, that some certain wise ones present augured "it must be followed by the evil-eye!"

And so it seemed to be.

Before such a day could come round again, that honoured host was deemed still more honoured by the distinction which sent him on the royal errand: but months and years passed, and Sir Eustace, from the time he turned his back on his home, to go on that fatal embassy, did not return to its gates again; the act being in obedience to his King was the ground of his declared banishment, even at the very time when, after having sacrificed his domestic peacefulness to the beseechings of the very men that denounced it (who had made his brother their persuading advocate to him, to seek such advantage of the sovereign), he was combating difficulty on difficulty, to fulfil his mission

to the utmost: but he was the King's servant, and would not be their partisan; and there lay the difference.

A little time longer, and the gracious monarch who had also harkened to that suit, through him; he who had been his honouring guest, and blessed his child at the baptismal fount, and who had pledged his royal faith to be a father to it and to its gentle mother, during its own parent's absence on his delegated duty; he was put to death on a scaffold: and the people at large were become a prey to civil dissensions from city to city.

During these transactions, Matchelowe Court had changed its owners: it had long lost its wonted inhabitants; for the lady and her young son, sometime before the last seal was set to real treason, by the act of the thirtieth of January 1649, had passed over sea, to seek her lord in the land of loyal men's exile.

There, after the fatal event, the widowed Queen deeming herself a yet more hapless mother (for some of her children were still in the grasp of their father's

destroyers), continued to live in a court of mourners: her eldest son, meanwhile, took his suppliant rounds from courts to courts of different descriptions; soliciting that aid, which in those times a brave young prince had a right to require at the hands of brother sovereigns, to reinstate him in the dominions of his inheritance; nor was the royal cause quite over in England: there were those both of its gentry and its commonalty that abhorred the reign of the regicides.

But though battles had been fought previous to the King's death, and after the catastrophe, were still fighting from north to south of the whole island, there yet remained quiet within the walls of the old manor house: the troops of neither party had found occasion to march nearer its precincts than within the eye-glass ken of the gardener. This was an old domestic of its banished lord; who, on certain days, used to go to the lantern-window at the top of the clock-tower, over a dark, walled-up part of the building, which in former ages was the papist

chapel, and wail out his heart for hours; watching the passing to and fro of the parliament forces, as they speeded between the new rulers and their Lord General Cromwell. His excellency (for so it was the mode to style him) was then far in Scotland, fighting, inch by inch, the cause of the commonwealth against young Charles Stuart, who at last had made head enough to land there early in the second spring after his royal father's death, with a small batallion of brave but firmly-attached followers; and being hailed on his arrival by a similar resolute little band, they crowned him King at Scone, and paid him loyal homage: but to pass the Tweed for England was another object, and not to be so easily effected. Cromwell, with his legions flushed from their victories that year in Ireland (where they had gathered plunder like reapers sheaves, while subjecting the people to his cap of liberty), threw himself upon the plaided fields of too lately faithful Scotland; and the contest began.

" A plague on such excellencies!" exclaimed the old man, as he sat one evening in his solitary aerie, after descrying a bannered courier speed swiftly down the great north hill, as if bringing some triumphant tidings: "win what ye may, ye care no more in reality for the commonweal ye make such rout about, than my spade for the worms! — Oh, good Sir Eustace! which of them all gives a meal of food to the poor maimed wretches, filled to the belt when you were master here; and who called so blindly against the times of peace which kept your gallant sword at home, for shows of honour and merry days alone?"

And then he bemoaned the last of those bright and happy days. But where was that good lord gone? And where was the gracious and august head laid which had looked on the humblest sports in the Bloom Shaft field, and smiled with generous sympathy? One was a wanderer in other lands, with an act of outlawry against his life, should he ever return to his own! And the other — "they had

done to him whatever they listed!" And the venerable muser could not bear to think on the cruel imagery his sad remembrances had conjured up, but turned his face heavenward to the silvery light peering through the grey billowy clouds, and devoutly whispered to himself:—

"Blessed be the word that tells us there is One up there, hypocrisy cannot hoodwink! and the time my lady's noble brother foretold may yet come—*These kites, having torn in pieces the best of the land, will fall to and devour each other!* And shall these aged eyes see it, when thine, brave young lord, have been long closed under the fatal sods of Newbury?"

And thus Gervase, the old gardener, would often mutter his soliloquies in the clock-tower, or by day-dawn, at the side of his son Hugh, when walking from their cottage shed to their business in the garden; for Hugh, being halt in a foot, could not be drafted to the wars, and hence was allowed to remain an assistant in the grounds. The labourers under them were boys from the neigh-

bouring villages — a set of idle, head-strong youths, who cared not on which side the battle turned which their fathers had been haled away to fight, while themselves might stay at home, guardians of their own freedom; and they allowed little of it to be trenched upon in the execution of their work when any favourite pastime occurred to tempt them to the gratification; for every parish school-house had been levelled by the new order of things, and the churches of the establishment shut up: hence, the children having nothing to learn and nothing to do, the natural result ensued — they followed their own wills in every thing, and when they became youths, mischief, rather than any useful calling, seemed the pursuit of their lives.

That there were places of worship, though not any yet refounded for education, cannot be denied; but the first were at the whim of any preacher except of the established church; and the latter could not be thought of while restraint

was so let loose that no man knew the measure another would bear; nor could a parent guess what was to be the leading principles to be laid down in a child's mind with regard to a government which had not yet any fixed form, nor indeed any certainty of stability. While the sword was drawn, and blood at flow, no human calculation could decide on which part the deadly weapon was to be scabbarded; and therefore, whether loyalty were crime, or insubordination virtue, no man could determine.

From this state of things it may easily be conjectured that the old-fashioned habits of the venerable gardener, accustomed to bonneted respect from his inferiors, moving cheerfully on dewy lawns to their morning work, could not well brook the saucy laziness of abusive boys, despising age, and contemning authority. Hence he usually left them to the more coercive means of his strong-armed son; who, as must always be the case where there are either no laws to obey, or a disposition to resist them, compelled the fulfil-

ment of the duty to be performed by the superior weight of arm only.

Therefore, to entirely escape the contest, Gervase always turned aside from the paths where he descried any of these refractory labourers, and strolled away alone with his spade in his hand through the deviously-winding vistas, then overgrown with rambling shrubs, and the wild root-shoots of the devastated trees, and where those idlers never came. He would talk to the grey-mossed stumps of those trees, of the days their green and fragrant branches had shaded. And even at nights, when the young and careless slept, he would wander out from his wakeful bed, and hold like converse with the stars, shedding their dews, like sympathising tears, upon the solitary garden walks.

It would have been more than his remnant of life was worth, perhaps, had he uttered words of such "malignant import" to less faithful ears. And, indeed, he never ventured to speak above his

breath without first looking round to see who might be within hearing.

But Gervase did not always find those walks solitary: therefore, for the sake of that one gentle traverser of the same paths, a fair young creature, who of late had taken up her abode in the manor-house, and, clad in deep mourning, would sometimes appear walking slowly along the most retired terraces of the garden, or wandering like himself through its remoter wildernesses, he began to resume his self-imposed task with pleasure; dressing the gravel or green sod with his hoe, and clipping the luxuriant over-growth of the long-neglected parterres; and that fair creature often stopped in her path to thank the white-headed gardener for his little offerings of flowers or choicest fruit, which he sent in to greet her morning or evening repast.

From her all the misrule in the domain was carefully concealed by the discreet matron who had held the principal charge over her from infancy up to this her earliest stage of womanhood. But Betha,

the daughter of Geoffrey Baldry, possessed a heart which, though it might easily be guarded against the comprehension of what vice meant, could not be protected from its own inherent quickness at comprehending any thing of distress or sorrow whenever it came in the least within the sphere of her possible observation; and her thoughts accordingly often pondered on the strange changes which had taken place on the spot where she trod; for, with such a disposition as hers (though she was only seventeen at the time of these meditations), she regretfully remembered how she had seen it just before its original owner left it; and she recollected, too, how kindly she had been treated by him, and afterwards by his lady, and indeed by all its inmates, when, on such occasional though very rare visits with her mother. Betha was then a mere child; but affection makes its impression at any age; and she never could be made to understand why both her parents disliked going more frequently to Matchelowe Court. Nor while

afterwards lamenting the desolating alterations there, and, subsequently, the decree of perpetual exile issued against Sir Eustace and all his family, could she be made to comprehend the reasons for so sweeping a judgment: though, indeed, with regard to the chief member of it, the reason had been more than once summed up in one word; and she shuddered and sighed that her honoured parent had been so little blessed in his kindred.

Betha, however, did not the less grieve that in all such cases the innocent must suffer with the guilty. And often when she strolled alone in the gardens of the place, now her father's, she mused on the probable fate, if they yet lived, of the children and wife of the unnatural brother, who, in seeking to depreciate and defraud his father's elder offspring, and to betray the cause of his country into foreign hands, had plucked disgrace and ruin on himself and his posterity. She remembered how that deceiving uncle had fondled her on his knee; and she felt his crime was the greater for the

caresses he had bestowed on the child of his abused brother. And her pure lips could not but with strange conviction of the portent, say to herself, — "And did not that deceit canker the bond of this possession? And so it has passed from him to the head he would have injured!"

Such images being too painful to her youthful mind to dwell on, which loved to think on the good only of human nature, she generally dismissed the thought of Sir Eustace as soon as it occurred; but when any recollection of the banished Lady de Matchelowe, or of her disinherited sons presented itself, Betha entertained such memory with respect, and often with a grateful tear.

She had some remembrance, too, of the old gardener. And she regretted within herself at seeing how he had shared the fallen condition of his former employers; for his raiment was coarse and decayed, and he appeared utterly disregarded by any of the domestics of the house; or, if casually noticed in passing, or spoken of in her hearing, it was

always by the appellation of "the old heir-loom," and often with some connecting words of still greater contempt. But Betha saw more to pity than despise in the feebleness and dependency of hoary age: and influenced by the feeling, she frequently lingered on her path to cheer and raise his neglected state with her notice and her thanks. And in doing this, she often sought to give him the distinction of personally obliging her, by asking him to gather any particular nosegay of his finest flowers, and receiving it from him with her own hands. One day, indeed, on one of these occasions, when she took the little bouquet from him, she remarked that it contained no rose. He shook his head mournfully in his reply.

"No, lady," said he, "the cutting down of all my good trees withered them all! The white rose perished first! Ill befall the hands that mowed them down! Yet may their innocent generations be spared!"

Betha looked stedfastly at the old man,

and felt, from the agitation of his utterance, there was more meaning in what he had said than in its speech; and her compassion qualified the reproof, which, as the daughter of a true republican, she conceived to be her duty to give to even this aged repiner under her father's roof.

"Gervase," said she, "there are many I pity in this land, who, it would be well if they would pity themselves, and not encourage evil thoughts against their benefactors!—persons who pass through the fire of an ill world to save those who slander them from the mischiefs they would pluck back upon their own head."

"I understand you, lady," replied he: "you think me a malignant. And so I am, if to remember the great and good be an evil thought to those who can banish and slay what they deem hardly of! Young lady, I am not too old to die in prison yet, if it would befit the niece of good Sir Eustace to send me there!"

"Gervase," returned she, "my uncle —but I must not speak. This, how-

ever, mark! Do not venture to express yourself thus rashly with regard to our just rulers, except to me: for I can excuse and even respect the prejudice of gratitude."

Gervase dropped the little hoe from his trembling hands, and clasping them together, ejaculated—"And I had reason to be grateful! I, and mine, and the poor, had reason to call down blessings on the heads of them who may not now have a pillow to rest on! Or it may be, that they too have found peace in their graves. I should sleep more quietly o' nights could I think that!"

While he was speaking, Betha observed one of the helpers approach the spot where she and the gardener stood; and, hastening to take her leave, with an increased emotion in her own breast, she bade him be of good cheer for the poor, at least, under the Commonwealth. "And for the rest," she said, "the world may take from us what it cannot always restore. But God, who takes, can give again;" and her eyes looked for a mo-

ment upwards, bright as the heavens she gazed on. Then turning away, she walked slowly down the path; the white handkerchief that soon after mingled its folds with the black scarf on her bosom showing that a daughter's tears for a beloved mother were flowing there.

CHAP. VI.

The helper who drew near was Hugh, the gardener's son. The venerable herdsman of the field of the tradition was the grandson of that Hugh, who, in his extreme old age, had often told the story of those eventful times in the hearing of his grand-child. The boy cherished the romantic and awful tale in his quick and retentive memory; and, in his own narrative old age, used to describe, with a sort of wondering admiration, the account his grandsire gave of the transcendent beauty of the three noble ladies, whose connection with the history of the field, to which mysterious circumstances afterwards gave the name of the Forty Footsteps, formed so deep a part of its interest.

It has been said, that there are no objects in nature which make so imperative

an appeal to the best feelings of man as a lovely, defenceless woman, or a confiding, helpless infant. And, we may add, so vividly is the law written in the unperverted heart of man, that, let his degree in life be high or low, or the objects of such appeal be, in like manner, exalted or humble, the effect will be the same — he respects and pities; and, according to the necessity, devotes himself to the princess or the peasant girl that may need his aid. These are the feelings which make a generous equality between ranks; and where they mutually exist, the noblest principle of equality is tacitly acknowledged and acted on, though it never interferes with the natural or civil distinctions of life. Indeed, it rather tends to preserve them; "giving unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's!" — "I will have mercy; for the cry of the weak or the oppressed is a sacrifice unto me!"

This was the simple faith of Gervase and his son: and though their means

were feeble and their lot obscure, yet by that principle each was content to abide, be the issue to themselves weal or woe. And every day bearing its testimony to the ingenuous Betha that such was their characters, she gradually became accustomed to hearing names with honour from their lips, which heretofore had never been mentioned before her but with terms of obloquy; and, almost unconscious of the interest she felt, she often found herself asking questions about them of their faithful memorialists.

In this way, one morning, when the discourse led, from a carnation-bank where Gervase was culling its flowers, to the Bloom Shaft field, and the presence of the Queen there, Betha casually enquired what that unfortunate Princess was like? Then indeed did the withered cheek of the aged narrator glow with the answering recollection; and the exclamation burst forth — that no female comeliness he ever saw could bear comparison with that the royal canopy on the terrace contained, on the

evening he spoke of! "I repeat," said he, "the words of the young Lord Falkland, my Lady's brother, who, standing by Sir Thomas Fairfax — Oh, woe was the day that gallant gentleman forswore his honourable self, and became an enemy to the great and good in that memorable scene! — I stood behind them, and I heard the young lord say to him, 'There, Fairfax; a fairer vision never opened on man!' He was a fondly-attached brother; and my Lady sat by the side of her Majesty when he pointed to the canopy."

And then Gervase, in his more homely language, proceeded to describe the majestic form of the royal Henrietta, as she appeared there, in the tempered splendours of regal magnificence, but with the fullest lustre of her incomparable female charms. The substance of his account was as follows: but, perhaps, given more in the words of Sir Thomas Fairfax than in those of the old gardener; Fairfax, on a subsequent, and long-after occasion,

verifying the description to the same attentive auditor.

The Queen sat as a painter might have represented the beauteous bride of Ahasuerus. Her fine raven hair rose in braids, mingling with the jewels of her light diadem, and presenting a forehead open and frank, with softly lucid eyes beaming under dark lashes, like stars in the brow of evening. The rest of her features were of the most stately dignity, excepting her mouth, and there every smiling tenderness played: it was rosy and dimpled, like her infant's. And when, on the waving of the royal banners on the garland-shaft, she rose, and held forth the young prince, in acknowledgment for the homage, then the homage was repeated from every admiring lip to herself.

But for the beauty of the Lady Aphra! How did her noble brother point out its differing perfections! "You might kneel and worship the Queen of England like the Queen of Heaven," he said; "and think the benignant and august Charles

fitly mated in so royally-beautiful a bride. But my sweet sister! so fair, so delicate, so retreating; — she seems some virgin-flower just gathered, all trembling under the glittering dew that hangs upon it."

"And it was true. For, oh, how like was she," continued Gervase, "to the lily-rose you, dear lady, have now sought for in vain in this place; but which was then worn in every loyal breast in yon field, so sweetly tinged with the maiden's blush! — And so was she, when the applause rung round, because of her lord's and his gracious Majesty's entrance beneath the shaft to drink *Health to the merry men of England!* Her own young son stretched out its little arms, as if to join in the benison; and entangling its pretty hands in the light scarf that half concealed its mother's face, at once drew it off, and discovered her all happy tears, and glowing with a wife's sacred emotions, to every gazing eye. In that moment the royal grandeur of Henrietta's mien seemed to be disregarded. Indeed, there was not a man on that spot who

might not have wished the partner of his bosom to have shone in mind and body like the lady of Sir Eustace de Matchelowe; for she was a lovely and a modest lady."

Hugh, happening to be at work, with only a copse-hedge between him and the speakers, overhearing his father talking thus to Betha, thought within himself, "And she, too, is a lovely and a modest lady!" And that very same evening he chanced to find another who had found the opportunity to form the like opinion of the new lady of the manor-house.

It was Betha's custom to turn away whenever Hugh, or any of the young labourers in the garden, crossed her path; and, after her usual evening walk there, she frequently entered a little ruinous summer-house that stood in a remote part of the grounds, westward, and was situated over the spring-head of a clear rivulet, which flowed in that direction. Some decaying furniture remained in the place, and amongst it an old pearl-inlaid

table of virginals, which, being of a peculiarly fine tone, attracted Betha, and there she commonly sung her evening hymn.

On this particular evening, while she was softly touching the keys with a few prelude notes, the ear of a stranger, who by an extraordinary accident had strolled into that quarter of the garden, heard them with a pleased surprise; and pausing in his walk, stopped and listened, while her voice, low and plaintive, but exquisitely melodious, sung the following words from Crashawe's Hymn on the Nativity:

"We saw thee in thy balmy rest,
Bright dawn of our eternal day!
We saw thine eyes break from their East,
And chase the trembling shades away;
We saw thee — and we bless'd the sight —
We saw thee by thine own sweet light!"

That stanza ceased. And while her fingers were running over the beautiful symphony which preceded the return of her voice, the stranger was tempted to draw gently towards the half-opened casement of the window, and look in:

and there he saw the unconscious performer, seated on an old-fashioned tripod-stool, before the virginal table. Betha's side face was to him. But no part of it was then hidden by the close black hood belonging to her mantle, which always covered her from head to foot when walking in the garden. The hood now hung quite off; and part of the cloak also lying loose on the floor by her, the stranger beheld the whole youthful line of her slight and delicate figure, habited as she was in a vesture of cypress-velvet fitting close to her shape, even to the snowy circle of her slenderly-rounded throat, where a white falling collar, called a weeper, lay upon each graceful shoulder, and parted on her bosom.

She was looking up while meditating the recommencement of her singing, as if communing with the Divine object of her hymn; and her bright auburn tresses being knotted back, though thence they fell in long luxuriant ringlets, the whole lovely profile was displayed; showing features of the most touching softness,

but elevated with an angelic expression, that looked like inspiration. There was only a shadowy kind of light about her, so that he could distinguish no colours of complexion; nothing but the pale, moon-light hue of her neck and face, and of her hands, as they moved glidingly over the keys of the instrument. And one high shrubbery tree, waving before a second window of the summer-house, just where she sat, the fluttering of the leaves seemed to shed a scintillating brightness over her face; illumining it one moment with the moonbeams, and in the next, leaving her half-discernible features in visionary outline; indeed, like the sudden apparition, and vanishing again, of some blessed visitant from another world.

She began to sing again: and in the instant, the stranger retreated back from the window to listen with more security, fearing she might cast a glance round, and by discovering him, interrupt the rapture he enjoyed. Hugh emerged from a dark dell near the fountain, and the listener, seeing him, started. But

even in that moment he held up his hand to the new intruder, in token of silence; and the air of him who did so being that of a man accustomed to be obeyed, Hugh stood mute; hearkening with nearly as much delight as the more cultivated taste of the nobler auditor.

When the voice ceased, and the last strain of the concluding notes too, the stranger hastily followed the movement of the young gardener, who suddenly drew back into the screening shadows of the rambling shrubs, just as the door of the building opened, and the next instant the fair creature came forth. She was then wrapped in her mantle; but as she passed close by the two eves-droppers, she turned her head at the rustling the retreat of the stranger made in the bushes. Hugh, perceiving they were observed, bowed, and respectfully uttered, "Good night to your ladyship."

"Good night, Hugh!" was the gentle response. And she hurried on at a quicker pace.

They were in deep shade; but the

whole of her beautiful face had then been seen under the full eye of the moon by the stranger. He put his detaining hand on the arm of Hugh, but waited till the light step could be no longer heard, and then he enquired of him the name of that lady, and whether she were a resident in that place?

The reply was simple and ready: "She was the lady Betha; the daughter of President Baldry: and she now lived in the old manor-house."

"And she appears a modest, a lovely, and a pious lady," returned the stranger. He paused a moment, and then went on. "Such as she is, need not titles to stamp them of the best. But you call her lady. That, young man, I may deem rather in right of your memory of her uncle the cavalier, than by authority of so loyal a liegeman to equality as her father? Your manners speak as if you had served her uncle of this place."

"I did," replied poor Hugh, with an irrepressible burst of honest recollections; "and ill should befall me, if I served his

brother but for the sake of my old father, who I may not leave alone amongst these heartless Roundheads: and now, for her sake too, since she is come here. For though the President's name, they tell me, was not down in the parliament list, he is hugely praised by the fellows on yon lines there, as being supposed one of the first advisers to the cruellest stroke that ever brought death to a gracious ruler. Black will be their winding-sheets for that! But she, sweet lady! would not harm the meanest thing which hath the breath of life."

The stranger allowed the indiscreet retainer of the old manor-court to exhaust his feelings without interruption, and then he briefly remarked: "Hugh! so I think the lady called you? you have said too much to be trusted to accidental ears. And for the sake of the parent's safety, for whom you say you continue here, you must be more prudent hereafter. But, meanwhile, be assured you have spoken now to one who will not betray you, — one who mourns with yourself,

that men will try to compass good ends by wicked means. Therefore, as the doom is judgment on such; and there are signs, it must be admitted, of the ruin a race, begun in this so lately noble place; do as your brave heart dictates, and abide, but in peaceable submission to the authorities that be, by that lovely daughter of a divided house, as long as she dwells under a roof,—which, indeed, ever since a Baldry became its master, seems to have had but scanty blessing; though with regard to what those men say, remember supposition is not proof."

The speaker then in his turn bade the faithful Hugh "good night!" and would have put a piece of gold into his hand; but the young man drew back respectfully. "Your pardon, sir! We work here; and we live by the sweat of our brow: but since our lord went, we have not taken money as gift of any man."

"You do well," replied the stranger; "and the time will be, that the bread such principle casts now upon the waters, will come again unto you after many

days! Once more I enjoin you — be discreet! and, farewell!"

With that parting injunction, the speaker turned into a cross path, through the low thicket, towards the yet more wilderness part of the domains, which in former times led by a long elm avenue to the village of Matchelowe; but now, by various chasms in the dilapidated walls, opened to the wide country westward.

Hugh made the best of his way home to his father's cottage, determining in his mind, that though he had been imprudent enough to commit the sudden ebullition of his regretful memories to a stranger, he would not disturb the quiet of his venerated parent by repeating aught of what had passed, or even saying a word of having met the stranger at all.

Indeed, it may be said, that by tacit consent, both father and son generally avoided all reference to times past or to times present, whenever the occurring events recalled those recollections which

it were almost treason to remember; and therefore, for the mutual safety of each other, each thought only of the other on such occasions, and mutually held their peace. But, with regard to such a subject as the kindly and angel-like Betha, there was nothing to interdict discourse: she was the most cheering theme of their tongue; and the more they saw of her, and the more they heard of her from the other servants of the family, they were convinced she was "a good lady!" and "deserved a better man for a father than his honour the President Geoffrey!"

But Gervase and his son Hugh were the only servants of the house who thought so of the President; for they alone remained of any who served there at the period it was left by all of the name of its rightful owners; and on the whole domain being sequestrated by an act of parliament, grieving they witnessed its suspicious transfer on the same day, "to the right-worshipful commonwealth-citizen, Geoffrey Baldry, paternal brother

of the vile and outlawed malignant, the Cavalier Eustace de Matchelowe."

From that time, Matchelowe Court had been shut up — being no longer used as a family dwelling-house — and put under charge of a couple of servants from the new proprietor's city mansion. The gardens were abandoned to Gervase and his son to dress or despoil; and the latter display of their manual labour might, perhaps, have been most agreeable to the wayward taste of the owner; for it appeared that no sooner did President Geoffrey become master of the place, than he so despised the acquisition, that he seemed to take even a pleasure in seeing the damps corroding the antique walls, its once costly furniture falling into tatters, and the terraced walks overgrown with weeds till the marble parapets, and steps from one to the other, were lost in the rank herbage.

Gervase, who remembered when Philip Baldry, the great "merchant prince," married the Lady Eustacia, and took up his residence in the ancient seat of her

ancestors, could have told how nearly his own remark squared with that of the stranger, had it been imparted to him, "That blessings seemed to fly the house when a Baldry became its master!" Gervase remembered the pride with which that lofty-minded citizen had cast his eye with even more exultation on its feudal honours, than heart's satisfaction in the graces of his young bride. And what was the result? She was rifled from him! his new distinctions passed to her babe, and he lived in those courts a self-accusing, repining widower; and then, when the same "evil eye" visited those very domains in the person of his eldest son, did it not trouble the possession of their rightful inheritor? and, at length, now that the envier had become the master, what then? It was joy to the foot of such possession to trample into ruin the boast of the loftier name! But when the President's great city palace became engloomed by the sorrow of his only daughter and child, on the sudden death of a mother who loved her tenderly, and

whose true benevolence of character had ill sympathised with the ostentatious displays round the really cold and narrow heart of her vain husband; then Geoffrey, wearied with "the house of mourning," and devising how to remove it, or rather its cause from him, bethought him of the deserted mansion he had formerly coveted, and since consigned to desolation; and, sending in a band of trusty servants to set all in order for the reception of his daughter, daylight again beamed in at the unclosing shutters of the windows; the splendid arras of the past century was once more taken from its press, and hung up in the chief apartments; while what remained of other rich furniture were stripped from their canvass cases, covered with the cobwebs of something more than seven years, such being about the lapse of time since Sir Eustace left the place; and then his forlorn lady laid aside the gala panoply of the house, putting all in ward till his promised day of return, when the whole was to be restored to its place in the wonted happy

home. But it was not to be so! and for the daughter of the despoiler of her husband and children, it was to be brought forth.

When Betha first entered Matchelowe Court as its mistress, she was accompanied by her monitress, Dame Mildred Woolnoth; a matron most devoutly attached to her, and who had been the foster-sister of her mother. At that time, Betha thought of nothing but the parent she had lost, and felt herself merely exchanging one home of her father's for another.

Either, however, in point of unmolested quiet to herself, might have been equally secluded; for having scarcely attained her seventeenth year, she had neither shared nor wished it in the gorgeous festivals with which her father's mansion so often abounded. Her mother had disliked the grandeur he doted on, possessing in herself the real republican spirit he only assumed: and the simplicity of her conduct was in all things the same; presiding in the civic feasts of her hus-

band, he was proud to say, "with the calm dignity of a Roman matron;" but she felt it was the meek obedience of the Christian wife.

From her, Betha had learnt to not less honour her father than to fear him; and while obeying him to the uttermost, to remember she was, in that, obeying her more heavenly parent; and thence to love the duty she might otherwise hereafter be inclined to regard with repugnance. From a father or a husband's authority the wife of Geoffrey allowed of no appeal. They, she said, were the only just, hereditary, and legitimately-elected sovereignties, and in this faith Elizabeth was reared. From both parents, then, she had imbibed every possible prejudice against the power in a national ruler that could be invested in a single man; and, of surety, it was easy to bring forward to the slender range of reading usual with a girl, those instances of royal tyranny which more or less deform the pages of almost every history in the world; for every one can distinguish the aggressions

of a monarch, while those sustained from any body of men become shadowed in the crowd, or are shifted about with regard to the perpetrator from one to another, until the sufferer be at a loss to fix on the hand whence he has been injured, and so the matter passes into silence, and falls to the ground.

Betha was not of a disposition to derive much satisfaction from this branch of her studies, nor in hearing the alleged crimes expatiated on which successively brought such and such a British nobleman to the justice of the block. Her mother always bowed to the well-argued fiat of her husband, in pronouncing the fatal blow to be only pure-handed retaliation on the heads of an insolent and trampling aristocracy. But on the morning of the King's death, when Geoffrey entered the room to his wife, all in flushed agitation, and throwing down his furred mantle and golden staff of office, announced that "Charles Stuart had just paid the forfeit of despotism on the scaffold!" Betha saw her mother weep; and heard her

lament that proud custom first made such differences between the conditions of men, and then selfish gratification increased them, until the powerful became oppressors. That they should fall was right; "yet," added she, "they are fellow-creatures, and I pity them."

"Therefore," returned her husband, "no man should have any extraordinary power over his fellow-man, which does not come by his superior virtues. And that it may be kept uncontaminated, the channel of public trust is not to be dammed up by any obstacle. The chair of the Great President of the State will be as free to every individual, as that of the Merchant-Adventurers was to me when my compeers saw mine the abler ability to fill it. "Yes," cried he, wiping the hot drops from the swelling arteries of his brow, "we may now date the birth of England's Commonwealth! Such lists are opened as never were seen in your mimic foolery of courtly vassalage! Here is the manly career; patriotism against the despotism of old feudal laws;

mind, against hereditary pretensions. And, dearest mate, thou shalt see how citizen Baldry will charge them all."

But his wife did not feel any joy in his evident view of the sort of consideration that might accrue to himself from the consequences of the terrible execution just made; and as he proceeded to descant on the regulations given out with regard to the partition of the late royal offices and their attendant ceremonials, it seemed to her too like the pride of having the lictors at their own doors, now that those of the old patricians were closed up or levelled to the ground. Still, however, she agreed with him in the hard necessity for what had been done. And while she bewailed the general weakness of human nature, which, even in the honoured patriot before her, her idolized husband, appeared so liable to warp into the vanities of power when thinking he aimed at its duties alone, she did not the less, when in private with her daughter, seek to impress upon her young mind, aghast at the recent san-

guinary description, every republican conviction against the late King that could warrant the sentence against his life, and for the perpetual banishment of his children.

A tale of execution on any malefactor can never fail of exciting some sense of compassion in a female listener, though with a shudder of abhorrence at the criminal himself. Such was the feeling with which Betha had been taught to hear the name of the decapitated Charles. He was represented as an oppressive tyrant who deserved his fate; and the sons, who might have succeeded him, possessing the same criminal principles, it was mercy, rather than severity of justice, in banishing them the realm for ever.

Such discourses, indeed, were seldom brought before the unwilling understanding of the guileless, happy girl, who fled from the appalling catalogue of crimes and miseries with the shrinking horror of an actual bodily torment. Therefore while her extreme youth, as

well as her mother's matron judgment, kept her from knowing any thing of the proud gaieties, rivals of the condemned past, displayed in the magnificent saloons of her father's house on days of civic entertainment, it also shielded her from the popular subjects in daily common conversation; which, in such times, could not but be fraught with the worst features of the world; often showing greater exultation in the triumph over the evil-doer, than against the principle of the evil itself; though the evil in many cases might have "made the angels weep."

Betha lived wholly with her mother and her monitress in a retired suite of rooms, which occupied the whole west wing of the dwelling part of the house, and opened into a finely-planted garden, running parallel on one side with the huge bounding wall of Guildhall, and on the others screened in by the backs of the store-houses of her father's merchandise, spacious and far-extending, a very treasure-city. In that pleasant gar-

den, which old Philip Baldry had formed in the manner of those he had seen in the East, at Ispahan; and in the undisturbed quiet of a home endeared by her mother's ever-smiling presence, Betha passed her childhood and the earliest spring of her youth. Her daily employment, the cultivation of the talents Heaven had given her; her daily happiness, the gentle exercises of her affectionate nature, whether in duty towards her dearest kindred, or kindness to faithful attentive servants, or tender associations with her mother in her ministries of benevolence.

And thus she might have continued, believing her city home an earthly paradise, with no wish to look beyond, to find a fairer any where, or beings to love or be beloved by yet more exclusively, when it pleased Heaven to deprive her of her mother. In that stroke she felt as if she had lost the vital sun out of her little world: all was darkness and desolation to her heart; and her young life seemed almost ready to run its last sand upon that beloved parent's grave.

It was then that Geoffrey Baldry took the resolution of removing her from the scene of her grief. And as some civic festivities drew near, in which his hospitalities must perform a principal part, and require him to strip his house of its mourning, he suddenly adopted the idea of sending his daughter without delay to the long-neglected mansion of Matchelowe Court; deeming it to be still sufficiently habitable to afford capability of being rendered a comfortable residence for an invalid; and, from its having become so entirely forgotten a place, must prove a desirable retreat for timid youth and cherished sorrow, as long as might be convenient to him to indulge an only child in such self-exiling propensities.

With this view, he made quick despatch in ordering every thing that could fit the old mansion for her occupation; and sending in a small, but trusty establishment of servants, selected from his own household, at the head of which her monitress, Dame Mildred Woolnoth, was placed.

Late in the autumn of 1650 he conducted his daughter himself to her intended temporary dwelling; and after entering with her under the obscuring shades of twilight, placed her in what used to be the grand suite of apartments, now renovated to the fullest of his hurried power, for the reception of his daughter; and there, looking round him with a satisfied smile upon his countenance, told Mildred to be careful of her charge, and then took a father's soothing leave of his unobservingly-weeping child.

CHAP. VII.

Autumn then passed away, and winter too, with this tender daughter's thoughts conversing more in heaven with her sainted mother's spirit than on earth with any living being; for Geoffrey became too much wrapped in state affairs, to spare frequent visits to her: and for Dame Mildred, she, who had always been taciturn, even when in the way of subjects for daily excitement of mind, since her removal to the deep sequestration of Matchelowe, became gradually so much more so, that, when not repeating some of her old lessons to her pupil (for Geoffrey forbade her to encourage Betha's melancholy by indulging her in recalling recollections of her mother), the good dame generally sunk into total silence, taking up one of her venerable, silver-clasped chronicle volumes to read, or

recommencing her knitting with the assiduity of a housewife who had her bread to earn.

Meanwhile, though Betha's meditations, so injudiciously attempted to be extinguished by the utter absence of all balm in sympathy, though they dwelt inward, round the sacred shrine of a parent's memory, like a holy lamp fed by a hidden flame, still her heart was sensible to the consolations of nature's voice; of nature's gentle pleadings, to remember that the Creator of all things had yet left her in a world of beauty, to be her sweet place of pilgrimage, till it was his good will to summon her to rejoin her beloved mother in their heavenly home.

In this spirit she often strolled out into the leaf-strewn wildernesses of the manor-house—for though the high trees were gone, much springing undergrowth remained—or took a more measured pace along its garden-parterres, still full of those luxuriant vestiges of former horticultural magnificence which are the last

clinging tenants of any soil where once such a garden has been.

When the weather became more severe, her station was more frequently found by the side of Mildred, either employed in works of the loom or the needle, befitting her sex and quality, or in reading aloud to her instructress, and then discussing what was read. But in the latter occupation the dame's remarks generally took such an ascetic hue, pressing so rigidly on human characters, and so entirely would have disenchanted the poetic mind of every sweet illusion in the world of its imaginings — the garden, Betha thought, of the human soul, which yet bore witness of the paradise it had fallen from — that though her reverence and her affection were not impaired for her englooming monitress, her sense of discomfort in her society gradually lessened her desire to seek it, and her own room and books became more often her winter day asylum.

Therefore, when the snow and the storm and the bitter blast were all blown

away, and the cheerful notes of the young year again sprung up with the lark, carolling its new-born delight over the refreshed earth, amongst the ether clouds of the blue heavens; — when the bud came forth, and the tender leaf, and the soft green sod shone in the morning's early sunshine, as if powdered with a thousand starry gems; — then Betha likewise left her pillow at the first song of the birds. And many were the hours throughout the sweet days of spring, which she passed, almost wholly, in some part or other of the widely-diverging grounds; sometimes gathering their earliest offerings, in the primrose and the violet, and carrying them in little knots to scent the reading-table of Dame Mildred; and at others, when the season became more mature, admiring its varied labyrinths of fragrant and flowery foliage—the mingling golden laburnum, purple lilac, and a thousand other shrubs of different hues and perfume.

While in these walks, as the simplicity of nature's tastes and the heart's respond-

ing dispositions, wherever mutually recognised have generally a reciprocal attraction often almost insensibly obeyed, much more powerful in their influence than the sympathy of intellectual endowments or the charms of personal accomplishments, Betha oftener found herself drawing near old Gervase than turning from him, when she entered a path where he was employed with his hoe or his pruning-knife; and though, whatever were the subject begun, whether of blossom or flower, the clouds or the April shower, still all brought the discourse round to the inhabitants no longer found there. But it was love that guided his tongue; and her own filial memories felt soothed by the plaintive regrets of the aged mourner over the far-distant, while the terms of venerating endearment which he coupled with the name of the uncle she had been long taught to consider a cold, self-absorbed character, made her feel as if even a moral spring were budding under her feet; and the balmy welcome in her bosom seemed almost a re-

cognition of its truth. With regard to her aunt, though Betha's mother, from a certain reserve towards persons of rank even of her husband's kindred, had rather avoided than sought her noble sister-in-law's intimacy, still she had always borne sufficient testimony to her daughter, that the Lady de Matchelowe was unpresuming and kind; and now when Gervase spoke of her meek virtues, Betha listened with the same gentle interest as on a theme familiar to her.

But when he brought before her mind's eye her young cousins — Arthur, as having hardly attained his thirteenth year at the time his father took him with him, to strengthen his quickly-growing youth by change of air and travel, when he went on his ill-starred mission into Germany — then Gervase described the happy boy's joyous eagerness at the thoughts of treading foreign shores, of seeing the fields of Crecy and of Agincourt; and the great river Rhine, with its rock-crested castles, where such brave knights as his namesake, Prince Arthur of old, used to keep fast-

ness for the protection of helpless persons, from the poor wayfarer to all undefended women and children.

"For," added Gervase, "our young Sir Arthur used to sit on the green banks of these terraces for hours, under the shade of the limes. There 's not a twig now to be seen: — Lord pardon such fellers of root and stem! — But there he read his books about such things, till he was all alive with impatience to be of age to go about doing good with sword and spear, like his great ancestor Sir Herbert de Matchelowe, who cut down a huge halberdier of his own band, because the fellow chose to throw a burning faggot at the head of poor Joan of Arc, when dying at the stake. — Oh, how I have seen that merciful boy's face all wet with tears, while he told me the story, saying, he believed that shedding the blood of a prisoner of war was one of the deadliest sins a man could commit, besides being a shame to honour; and when that prisoner was a woman, so brave and vir-

tuous too, he could only sob out his pity and his detestation."

These were traits in her young kinsman Betha delighted to hear, because she felt they were such partiality was not likely to colour; indeed, the stamp of fact was on every thing described by the simple as well as affectionate narrator. And when he spoke of the younger brother, the almost infant Henry, it was with a lingering fondness over the picture he drew, as if the very image in his mind were again playing before him in actual presence; sporting on the velvet sward till nestling his little head amongst the nearest flower-beds, he laughing fancied himself hidden from his watchful nurse or tender mother.

"Ah!" cried the saddening relater, "those times I shall never see again! No fond mother, no sweet child here now! No, no! nor shall I ever forget how she left her home. That child, we all thought born in so auspicious an hour, cradled in a queen's arms, wrapped in her own ermined mantle, that fine summer day

when she took him to receive the king's parting-blessing on his godson! But when the dear boy parted hence, it was a pitiless evening, and they were to go by stealth, too; none of the servants were to know but that my lady took him out for a walk; as if she of her own accord would have exposed him, just better of the measles, to that bitter, bitter wind! But it was to be! He was not then five years old; but I heard him say, — *Don't cry, mamma! we shall soon see papa, and be so happy!* — and he held by his poor mother's hand, running by her side as she, with her long mantle thrown over him, walked hurryingly and full of grief across the lawn yonder to the terrace-arch that leads to the Bloom-Shaft field. No one had been told what was going on; but I had note of it, for oh, Mistress Betha, love is watchful, and has many eyes! I dared not show myself, but I followed at a distance, and then I saw President Geoffrey."

Gervase paused a moment, recollecting that it was to Geoffrey's daughter he was telling the story; and, when he resumed,

though his tone was less composed, his language seemed more considered.

"The President had two men with him under the archway, and as soon as my lady appeared, they put her into the old sedan-chair, which had been in a recess there ever since it carried her Majesty the Queen to and from the house to the Bloom Shaft festival. Its damask linings were become all tattered, mouldy, and damp; but into it the afflicted Lady Aphra was handed. And then your ladyship's father, taking up his little nephew in his arms, put him in also; and flinging one of the men's cloaks over the head of the sedan, to cover the broken windows, I suppose, the men each took to the poles, and carried it out into the field. I watched it pass along; for, though the cloudy evening had brought darkness fast on, I saw it all the way across; and President Geoffrey walked by its side, and then it entered the postern of the redoubt, and that was the last I have seen of mother or son: nor, indeed, do I know whether both reached my lord in safety; for

if they did not take ship that dismal night, President Geoffrey told my lady, not only the place would be attainted for treason, but their lives taken away! and so no particular care could be thought of for the sweet child's health."

Betha now spared her commonwealth remarks. She no longer reasoned with him on the utility sometimes of these harsh measures for the safety of a state; though her heart, whenever repeating the severe principles of her monitress, always revolted at the argument. She rather listened with complacency, nay, with growing interest, while he talked; and soothed him when he ceased speaking with the consolations of piety; reminding him, in the language of her genuine pity, that Providence never deserts his people; nay, that even the most dissolute prodigal son has a husk prepared for him; and a shelter, however rude, in the wilderness: therefore, the bad and the good might trust in his parental mercy!

One day, in the midst of one of these

conversations, in which the old man appeared unusually low-spirited and feeble in the management of his light garden tool, he suddenly interrupted himself in the sort of half-whisper in which he generally spoke to Betha on these subjects, and looking round to see that none else was within sight of him, he slowly drew from his breast a small packet wrapped in a torn piece of black silk.

"My lady," said he, "I was very ill yesternight; and, as another such spasm may be my death-warrant from a gracious hand, I would not have these papers found afterwards in my cottage; neither will I trust my son Hugh with them, for they might bring him into extremity, poor lad! who has a heart as warm as mine to —— but that is no matter; he is lame, and can do no good; and why should he lose his life for nothing? Nor can I bear the thoughts of burning these papers, and so getting rid of them before I die; for there is something precious in them my lady's eyes would weep over, and my lord prize like his own

heart's blood. Will you take them in charge, sweet lady? Preserve them, and give them to your kinsfolk, should you ever meet; and, if not, send them if possible by some faithful hand!"

By a kindly spontaneous action, Betha had stretched out her hand, and taken the packet. But there was something in the solemnity of the concluding words of his request which caused her immediately to recollect herself with an apprehension she might be doing wrong, and continuing to hold it from her towards him, she asked, in a tone which showed her alarm, what it was, and where did he get it?

"I found it," he replied, "in the drawer of the great carved cedar inkstand-dish, in the room that used to be my lord's study, and where my lady always sat after he went over-seā. I found it about a month after the King's death, just two or three days after President Geoffrey had been a whole week here, sitting with secret councils at night, and in the day examining my lord's papers, and tearing them up; and then he called me in,

and ordered me to burn the shreds for my garden-manure, and lock up the room.

"When he was gone, I gathered them together as he bade me, and there were fairly nine or ten log-baskets full; letters, title-deeds, and the long pedigrees of the family. But what were these when there was no law in the land to hold land to its rightful owner? And when all the best blood in the land was to be spilt, safest was he against whom none of the sort could be proved in his veins. President Geoffrey did not get all here secured to him and his for ever till after the King and three great lords, his loyal friends, were executed. So, knowing that all was over with my own dear master's family here, and seeking about to make clear work, according to the President's commands, I chanced to upset the inkstand-dish. The drawer fell out on the floor, and that packet with it. It was unsealed, as you will see when you open the silk wrapper; and the papers flew about out of the cover. I took up first

one, and then another; and perceiving the names in them all most honoured by my heart, I could not bring myself to throw that packet also to the burning heap, but even took it home with me. It was directed to my lord, Sir Eustace; and certainly it was not amongst those I had my orders to destroy.

"Do not return it to me, kind lady. Take it — read it. You will find no evil in it to any now in this land; but the sign of God's providence. When men forget justice, he puts his doomsday verdicts into the mouths of babes and sucklings."

Betha trembled at these words, she knew not why; and, shrinking from the paper, held it pressingly to him. "I cannot take charge of it," said she: "these things are above a woman's judgment to be concerned with. Besides, if I receive it, I must confide it to my father."

Gervase started, dropping the hoe from his other withered hand, and shaking with an answering tremor. "If

you do, lady," cried he, "or even mention to him that such a packet is in existence, your Father which is in heaven will turn his face from you when you call upon him in your utmost need. But I beseech you, by that All-Gracious name, to take the papers to your apartment, and read them. Reading them can do no harm: and if you find ought that should make you fear to preserve them for the sake of an uncle that never turned his back to the cry of any living thing, then return them to me; or give them and me up together to a very different-judging master, his brother!"

Betha knew that in some respects her father was indeed a different character from the very lenient "thinker of no evil," Gervase had described Sir Eustace to have been. And she was also aware of his being not only inexorably rigid against common delinquents, but that he had more than once said, his principles of republican virtue were so strictly Roman, he should consider it his duty to give up his own attainted brother to the

scaffold, did any malignant event bring him to the sacrifice." Hence, in asking herself what might be the punishment her father would inflict on the too faithful servant of a banished master, she dared not answer, but recoiled from the thought of such virtue; which, to her Christian heart, seemed indeed the misty form of some questionable phantom, such as might have been the evil genius of the Capitol and Philippi, and which led the Roman patriot to his direful end.

Betha shuddered at the similitudes that occurred to her; and more distinctly feeling the divine impress of the injunction, *not to unite with them who bruised the broken reed!* "Gervase," said she, folding the packet within the corner of her veil, "I will read these papers, and you shall have my answer to-morrow morning. But, good old man, I will not think you can do me so much wrong as to suppose that I could wittingly cause one moment's peril to those grey hairs.

A republican's daughter is a woman and a Christian!"

"Bless you, lady!" was all his then failing voice replied; and so they parted.

CHAP. VIII.

AND Betha was as good as her word. That very same night she withdrew early to her chamber; and, quickly dismissing her maid after slight attendance, she bolted her door, that she might not be surprised by any nocturnal visit from her affectionate monitress; who, occupying a room near hers, sometimes slid in, as she passed, to see how her charge rested before she finally retired herself to her own pillow.

Betha having listened also till she thought all was silent in the house, and Dame Mildred actually gone to her apartment, composed herself to her task; placing her lamp on a little table at the end of the room farthest from the large mullioned window, which spread over almost the whole side of it; as if she feared the very stars that looked in

through the tracery-work of its upper casements (the lower were covered with shutters) would penetrate what she was then going to explore, and tell the tale to other waking eyes less disposed to pity and preserve the old man's secret.

Betha unfolded the piece of silk from the packet; which sable envelope was, in fact, the remnant of a funeral scarf hoarded by the old man as a relic of the wife of his youth, which he wore when following her to the grave, and had kept to be the binder of his own shrouded brow, till he thought he could not more sacredly bestow it, than to thus avert the moths and dust of his humble dwelling from invading the yet more precious deposit he had found.

The packet showed a large black seal, broken, with the impression of a mitre: this was on the envelope, which was directed to Sir Eustace de Matchelowe, but with no further address. Having promised the faithful servant to read the contents, even though she might not venture to retain them in charge for him,

she did not hesitate to take out the enclosures, two papers folded separately; but how cold did she turn, when, on opening the first that presented itself, she found it to be a duplicate of the warrant for the execution of the late King Charles!

Involuntarily she dropped it, as if she had touched blood, — and there was blood on it, though she did not perceive it then; and, as it fell from her hands, she determined to look no further, for she trembled exceedingly, though with an inward wonder at what could so excessively affect her then, when she had so often before heard of the event with no other emotion than the natural awe attendant on the condign punishment of a known criminal, however illustrious: but there was something she felt, in the sight of the very deed, or a copy of it, which had consigned a fellow-creature to the mortal stroke, that seemed to make her present at the blow, and her senses swam for a few minutes in bewildered horror.

Gervase, however, had represented the beheaded Charles in a different light from

what she had hitherto been accustomed to regard him; and though she thought she hardly attended to his regretful lamentations, and encomiums of that unhappy personage, deeming them while he spoke the blinded partialities of an attached servant in favour of a sovereign who had honoured the master he himself so devotedly loved; yet she now found that the constant dropping of the word of palliation at least had made its impression; and when she again wrought up her mind to fulfil her engagement with the old man, a new dread seized her of turning her eyes on the paper, lest she should see her father's name amongst the signatures, the first glimpse having shown her many columns of the condemning list.

"Alas!" cried she, looking upwards, "that it should ever be human duty to shed human blood!" and again shuddering, she threw her handkerchief over the open scroll. After a moment or two's pause, to nerve herself for what she believed her duty to the poor faithful one who had confided this his melancholy

treasure to her, she took up the second paper the envelope contained, and more cautiously unwrapped it: it appeared to be a letter, though of several pages, written in a very small but distinct hand, and began thus: —

"My friend, Sir Eustace,

"The cruellest deed that ever disgraced a nation has been accomplished: within, you will find a duplicate of the warrant, which, like the act itself, is the most blotted piece of work that ever defiled the records of a Christian people.

"But it is not of the writings nor the doings of these men, who have passed themselves through a strange ablution of blood, and to what end they know not; it is not of them, of whom I have seen enough, that I would occupy my pen now: I have my master's last message to deliver through you to his Queen, and to his eldest son; but it is to you only that I send the black list of his triumphant enemies, with the stains upon it which will make their own appeal to a better

arm than flesh: but I may not withhold the particulars, which need no other stimulus to a son's heart to remember whose son he was! You are on the spot with the Prince, and circumstances being too likely to prevent my ever seeing his honoured face again, to deliver in person my royal master's dying injunctions, and bequest to him, I now take advantage of a safe occasion offered me by one whose name it is not necessary to mention here, but who has sworn to me, that a faithful coadjutor of his will religiously convey this packet to your hands: he is one whom indeed the errors of these sad times have led far into their perversions; but yet he would not be present at the last consummation of their taking darkness for light.

"But I said, I would not write of these men, bad or good,—nor will I; but turn again to him, whom their ill deeds can no longer trouble nor touch, and in that conviction I find comfort in my still human sorrow.

"I was with my master when the duplicate of the warrant was brought in to him,

to show that his sentence was pronounced and sealed: it was read to him, and afterwards being laid on the table by the commissioner who had read it, the man withdrew. The noble victim of a thousand hypocrisies — lavished on him with oaths and prostrations of soul to betray him to that hour—then advanced to the table, and calmly looking on it, perused the names of the signatures silently to himself. When he had finished, he turned to me —

"'It is well!' said he. 'I have signed such a paper once, and at the persuading, nay, imperious demand of many whose names are written here. I thank my God that my name is now that of the attainted and condemned, rather than as it stood then. Of all my mortal sins, that sits heaviest on my soul this day.'

"And then the King knelt down to pray, and I prayed with him. He moved his lips, but I heard not what he said. His countenance, however, told the earnest nature of his petition; yet his brow was serene, for the contest was a holy one, nothing of earthly passions then

kindling the impressive fervour shining out in the usually mild lustre of his eyes. When he rose from his knees, he said to me —

"'Juxton, you told me truth in that most dreadful moment of my life! Had I acted by that single support in council, I should have acted by the express will of the Sovereign of all men — *Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil, that good may come of it!* But I did the evil, and this has come of it!'— The King laid his hand on the warrant: 'Strafford! Strafford!' cried he, in a solemn, heart-wrung voice, 'they who beguiled me from justice, sentence me without justice. So be it! for I take my punishment from purer hands than theirs. Expiate, then, Redeemer of the friend I sacrificed! — expiate the innocent blood I then consented to shed, even by thine only inestimable oblation, poured out for such as I am, — otherwise the most unpardonable of sinners!'

"Oh, Sir Eustace, how like a saint purified through suffering did our august

master then look! He never seemed so worthy of my reverence as at that moment. After a while, he began to converse with me again.

"'Tell my son,' said he, 'that I shall die in peace with those who have brought me to this hour. For I do forgive them the violence of my death, as I trust my own like transgressions shall be forgiven by a higher tribunal. But my bleeding body to-morrow will show that the Righteous One setteth his mark with signs that cannot be mistaken. The world will then have done with me; but the spirit of the sword, which these men on that day will have let loose, must continue to strike on the right and on the left, till brother falls by brother! Never to be sheathed, until those poor people, now shouting their acclamations at the announcement of my tyrant head being to be laid low, shall feel the iron in their own souls; and that every triumph over their king and the old laws of the land was a victory obtained over themselves!

"'If my son lives to hear such tidings,

it is not my voice, thus on the brink of the grave, that would bid him hold back from the suggestions of his birthright. No! in such a case, tell him, that it is my dying wish he should employ every means worthy a virtuous prince, to restore him to the throne of his ancestors. A man's birthright is his post: and should Providence recall my son to his, remember that my latest injunctions are, that he makes oblivion of all revenge there; that he receive the people returned to his care, even as the *Good Shepherd* takes again to his fold the simple sheep who had strayed to the wolves that rent him!'

"Even while he was speaking thus, the air was torn with another shout. It seems the three leading men of the self-created Court of Justice, and who had first signed the fatal paper, were then passing in under the gateway: for the King was at St. James's. We also heard carriage wheels, with the trampling of horses, and the repeated cries of 'Long live the friends of the people! Down with all kings and their race! Cromwell!

Bradshawe! the Commonwealth! for ever!'

"I could not but look towards my sovereign; and with an expression in my countenance, which told him in that moment I considered all equally deserving the most abhorring indignation. But the truly royal Charles, whose crown was then at the foot of the cross, with undisturbed submission in his voice and face mildly replied to that look—

"'It well becomes me to make a bequest of mercy on these, in my last will to my son, who in myself need so much more. And, Juxton, my last act shall repeat it on the scaffold.'

"And then, from the stir we soon heard in the adjoining passages, supposing it probable they might intend removing him that evening to some closer prison preparatory to the fatal stroke, he began to disclose to me his wished messages to his Queen, to deliver when I should join her in a foreign land; for he bade me, if possible, bear her his last thoughts from my own lips, as I had received them from

his. And then he spoke of his two dear younger children, whom these hard republicans had yet retained in England; though for what purpose he could not conjecture, unless for the cruellest one; giving me some directions he deemed essential, not only to their personal safety, but for the preservation of their minds from a subjugation worse than death, when they should be left without even a father's honoured name, in this realm of trouble, to cast a reflected protection over them. And then his saint-like eyes, for the first time since the fatal paper was opened before him, suffused with tears; but he grasped my hand and smiled.

" 'They have a better shield over them than my feeble arm ever could have been (and shall I not trust them to it?) to preserve them from the basest degradations, or to take them to itself, innocent as I now leave them!'

" Time was not given me to reply to this last observation of my sovereign—and what could I have added to such heavenly-minded consolations? — for he had barely

ceased speaking, when a new stir began in the gallery: quick and numerous steps approached the chamber we were in. I rose with the apprehension you may imagine; but my master sat still. The door was abruptly thrown open, and without further preparatory word of feeling, the royal children were announced, as come to take their last leave of their father. And they were introduced by the two churlish Commonwealth-men, their keepers, by no more ceremonious names than Elizabeth and Henry Stuart.

"But how can I bring that meeting before you? The King started from his chair at the names of his children. The young princess ran to him, throwing herself on his bosom with such a piercing shriek, it even now rings in my ears, and clung to him, till the suffocating cries of her struggling, speechless anguish became altogether dumb, in an insensibility like unto death. My honoured master held her in his arms, pressing his face to hers, and uttering words, the sound alone of which I heard, not the import. My

own soul was in tumults of distress, and I must say, of a sacred resentment too, against the men who could devise such a scene of human misery, and send others to witness it unmoved: for several came with the royal children, and stood carelessly looking on.

"The young Prince, who you know is hardly nine years old, and even more infant-like from his tender health, seems to have already experienced the usual effect of early suffering, and grown proportionally mature in understanding and feelings; for evidently apprehending that something very extraordinary was going to happen, on seeing the extremity of his sister's grief, he dropped suddenly from his standing position by his father's side, to which he had also run to share his caresses, and now clasping his knees, his smothered sobs showed how sensible even that young child had become to the appearances of threatening evil.

"The King had sunk into a chair with his precious burthen in his arms. And I was about to ask some of the hardened

wretches around, who stood gazing as if the scene were a play, to bring me a drop of water, to restore that miserable daughter of a fallen monarch to the sad comfort of his last embrace. But the pangs within did the office no Christian charity there would have bestowed. She uttered a piteous cry with her father's name. Then did his heart, indeed, give way. I saw it labouring with the whole tide of a parent's agony; and turning to the ruthless spectators, I said — 'For the love of God, if not for the pity of man, leave this father and his children alone with the minister of his soul, in these few moments before his last!'

"They started, stared at each other, but withdrew. And I locked the room door.

"When I came back to my place, the Princess was recovered to full recollection. The father's gush of intolerable anguish was past; and she sate in pale and mute despair, listening to his pious soothings; spoken in a tone, first indeed of tremulous tenderness, but gradually

becoming firmer, as the holy comfort he sought to bestow, fell back more balmy on his own inward wounds.

"'Elizabeth,' continued he, 'thou art thy mother's representative to me now. Tell her my soul trusts to meet hers in Paradise; and there she will know, that, err as I may have done against myself and others, this faithful heart never did her wrong. Tell her that I have passed some of my bitterest hours in remembering that she, the daughter of a king, and the greatest of earthly kings, should by my misfortunes have been made a suppliant, not to her peers and mine, but to those who knew not the beat of a noble bosom. But I forgive them, and I conjure her to forgive them, and to teach the sons she has borne me to do the same! Oh! Elizabeth, assure thy mother that her husband's consolation at this moment is, that he *can* pardon all from his heart. It is the covenant from her Saviour and mine—'*Forgive me my trespasses, as I forgive them that trespass against me!*'

This will bring me to the sabbath of his presence; and to her, while on earth, that *peace* which the world's retributions could not minister! There, Elizabeth, give that to thy mother. It has been my sceptre of power in these my latter days. Let it be hers!'

"The Princess took what he presented —I need not tell you what that was— and, pressing it fervently to her lips, put it in her bosom. The King drew her to him, and gently kissing her forehead, devoutly uttered — 'Bless thee, my child!'

"'O! do not forget your little Hal, my father!' cried the tremulous voice of the young Prince, who had checked his sobs, but still sate drowned in tears by his father's knee. The King raised him in his arms. 'Forget thee, my son!'

"O! Sir Eustace, had you seen our master's face at that moment! I could not bear to look on it again for a minute or two; but when I did, the child was placed on his knee; and, parting the wet fair locks from the yet streaming

little face, the mournful look of that infant countenance went like the traitor's poniard to my heart. But the father only regarded it with a deeper tenderness; and laying his hand upon his son's head, said — 'Thou shalt be blessed, my little Hal! better than a mortal parent can bless; for the God of the orphan will now be thy father, to see and hear thee when thou art in sorrow or in temptation, and to succour thee when thou dost pray!'

"'Oh!' exclaimed the child, 'an orphan has no father! But I have you, dearest father!' And there was an indescribable expression of apprehensive dismay in the poor babe's face as he proceeded. 'What are those people going to do, who shouted such wicked words when we drove in at the court-yard? Do they want to take you quite away, as they did our mother and our brothers? Oh! do not let them leave us behind! And we will pray our good God for that! Shall we not, dear Beta?'

"And the young Prince looked towards his silently-transfixed sister, while he put his little hands together in the action of prayer. The King did not, could not answer for a few seconds; but folding his arms round him for a moment, leaned his head upon his son's head; then raising it again with a steadily serene but solemn manner spoke: —

"'My child,' said he, 'if God grants thee life, thou shalt remember that thy father has spoken to thee in this hour as to a son of riper years. Hear, then, and attend to me! for I shall speak the truth to thee without concealment; that I may myself see how my boy will submit himself to his heavenly Father and to me.'

The child's tears were now all checked, and he looked attentively at his father. The king proceeded: —

"'These people thou sawest have despised God's commandments, and brought civil war into this country; and the Just Ruler of all men gives them up to the fulfilment of their own

perverse wills, until their very sins become their punishment. Meanwhile, it becomes me, as a faithful believer in the mercy of the Lord Jesus, in whose name alone I have taught thee to pray, to trust, that when these wicked men have taken away thy father from this world, He will receive my soul to His heavenly kingdom; where, my child, thou and thy mother, and thy brothers and sisters, will meet me again!'

"During these latter words, the young Prince, in a strange and distressful amazement, gazed still more stedfastly in the face of the revered speaker. The King, after an instant's pause, resumed:—

"'Yes!' said he, 'they will kill thy father! Mark what I say,—to-morrow they will cut off my head; and, to destroy all hope in thy brother Charles of ever being King in my stead, they will, perhaps, want to make thee put on his crown, and then they would commit all manner of violence in their young King's name as long as it might suit their wicked pur-

poses. But mark what I say,'—for the royal child turned of a deathly paleness, and, with eyes fixed, grasped his father's hand—'thou must not be a king at any time, while either of thy brothers, Charles or James, lives. For these men really desire no rulers they cannot master, and they would cut off thy brothers' heads whenever they could get hold of them; and thy head too they would cut off at last. Therefore, I charge thee, my little Hal, on no account be made a king by them.'

"'Father!' replied the young prince, 'they shall tear me in pieces first!'

"So determined an answer from a child of such tender age filled his father's eyes with tears, of an order different from grief. He pressed him to his heart. The princess, meanwhile——but I would not have a mother's soul racked with her daughter's image, while seated, listening, without sign of life but her posture, to these all hope-destroying sentences.

"'It is enough!' said the King. 'May God so bless you, my children, as you continue to love and be faithful to each

other. Elizabeth!' and he threw his other arm round her waist. Both were then clinging to his bosom. —— There was a noise in the passage.

"O Sir Eustace! I might as well dare to turn my eyes on the dying throes of a Christian martyr, torn by the fangs of savage beasts at the stake, as call to recollection that parting scene to describe it:—the separation of the royal soul from its body was less.

"When the Princess was borne out, and the young Prince ——"

* * * *

There, at that broken sentence, the page was rent away; and no more of the same hand-writing appearing amongst the remaining sheets, Betha, after the trembling eagerness with which she had turned them over in vain, withdrew her hand and her eyes from the appalling heap she had already read, and heaving a convulsive sigh, she said, falteringly, "Oh, what a guilt has been mine!"

For she recollected how her monitress had taught her to make the execution of

that day's merciless catastrophe a subject of annual religious thanksgiving. Twice, then, in the house of God, she had pronounced the unhappy Charles *a tyrant, unworthy* life, and joined with the hymn of devout rejoicing, that his blood was shed. Now she saw no King, no tyrant, only the father and his children.

"Searcher of all hearts!" exclaimed she, "pardon me this unholy gratitude. Thou knowest I spoke in blindest ignorance! Oh, forgive me, Lord, for the sake of Him who prayed for *them who knew not what they did!*"

She was on her knees in this fervent supplication, when tears came to her relief; and, weeping long and heavily, while leaning her head against the table, she felt as if she had partaken the blood of this cruel sacrifice; as if she had assisted in tearing away those children from his bosom. Then suddenly remembering, that in his death-warrant the second glance had shown her there were columns of names in signature, with their seals opposite, she again shook with horror at the probability of finding her

father's name there. But she had the resolution to draw the paper towards her, rather than remain a moment longer under the fearful apprehension, that the portion of blood-guiltiness was indeed entailed on him and his!

The lamp was close to where she knelt; and in an instant her eager sight ran down the ranges of names. There were seven columns of them—fifty-nine signatures in all. Breathlessly she passed her eyes from one to another, till she had seen that her father's name was not the next to succeed; and so she came to the end without meeting the pang she dreaded. Two of the signatures, indeed, in the fifty-nine, and which belonged to the last column, were scratched over by the pen; but not so completely defaced, as to prevent her discerning that her father was not even one of those apparently repenters of the deed they signed.

"Gracious Providence! I thank thee for this!" And her tears now fell in refreshing showers. She rose from her knees, but they still bent under her;

her frame as well as her soul being shaken by the change which that short half hour had wrought in her opinions of all these things and persons: for the paper which had given her the new view of them bore every internal mark of being genuine and true; and her eye turned on it again, with a natural wish that the person to whom it had been confided, with so estimable a reference to his character, though a political adversary to the writer's cause, might have been her father. And yet she thought, if so, would not the packet have been sent to its destination? And again, if so, would Gervase have warned her not to betray it into her father's hands, but under penalty of a malediction on herself?

CHAP. IX.

While reflecting on this, she took up the remaining sheets, written in different hands; and, finding them a succession of notes, or remarks from various persons on the preceding paper, according to their numbering, she read as follows:—

Note First.

"There is treason enough in this letter to hang the whole party concerned. Juxton must be made the first example of. The others, according to the tyrant's own hint, when we can get hold of them. But for the pitiful General, he must be made to know these are no times for tilting courtesies with enemies. Commonwealth-men must down with theirs by hand and foot, or never strike at all! The Test-Oath of yours to command,

Jo. B. President.

Note Second.

"By your excellency's leave, our right-worthy President, John Bradshawe, I presume to recommend we deal not so flushly open with a people who spread snares in our ways. And in consideration of retaining the power in the hands of the worshipful citizen who delivered this packet into our hands, to in like manner hereafter continue to beguile our enemies, of every sort, to confide their secret correspondencies into his good trust. I humbly offer counsel that no hint of having intercepted the same be given to any of the parties concerned, and especially not to General Fairfax, a hitherto trusty soldier of the Commonwealth. For in public matters exposure of small crime often stirreth a greater to defend it. And it may be well guessed, that not lukewarmness to the Commonwealth-cause, but a superstition of the repugnance which worked on him to gainsay the doom of the tyrant, spirited him up, or rather spirited him down, to wink hard at the possible treasonable mispri-

sions any packet might hold, penned from a malignant prelate here, to an equally malignant cavalier on the other bank of salt sea; a dead sea, to be hoped, between him and all like unto him, and this life-reclaimed land! And so, misdeeming charity, our staunch, but in this instance self-led coadjutor, took on himself to be the missive, to pass it for sure transportation into the safe modes of communicating beyond sea known to one other notable friend of the Commonwealth, he thought to find as weak in the eyes as himself—*Afeard to look upon the thing he willed as must be; or the thing he wanted could not be!* But he mistook his man. And I, being the channel through which the right worthy patriot, worthy of a truth of the times of the senate and people of Rome, has proved it, by bringing it straight to lay before me. And having thus submitted its nest of cockatrice eggs to your gifted opinion first, respected friend, and honoured President, John Bradshawe, I would, having read and carefully pondered on

that opinion, humbly opine myself, and strongly exhort that no stir *to noise* may be made about this affair; nor, indeed, be it made mention of at all in the council of the state, beyond yourself and Harry Ireton and myself; whom, without any self-seeking pride, we may cogently consider the brain and heart and marrow of the bones of the Commonwealth. It is not wise to let the crew of a vessel know of every spring by which its masters navigate it. Had Columbus done so, the new world would never have been made out. Let that hint be enough for other matters besides this.

"But when we come to speak of the hatcher of this bundle of treasonable missayings — that lawn-sleeved incendiary, Juxton, — he shall by no means escape. And I would reverentially propose to your meanwhile well weighing and digesting, that a judgment worse than the rack and the faggot, to one of his hierarchy, be awarded him. Strip him of his mitre and his crosier, and his prelate-purse, and lock him up at once in the

safe-keeping of any prison-house you may devise. But make the *Public* plea, the profane and papistical words he addressed to the traitor Charles Stuart on the scaffold, which made all good men's blood run counterwise in their veins when they heard them. I note them, to refresh your abhorrence of them at the signal hour. He said, holding up his hand, as if he would fain have had the wooden sign of papacy there.

"'Another step, sir, and it will carry you a great way. It will carry you from earth to heaven. And there you shall find, to your great joy, the prize that awaits you — a crown of glory!'

"The scandal of such a promise to the convicted and condemned enemy of all the honest folk assembled there, was a heinous offence moreover; and he may think himself well quits in just being made to sit down in that nakedness on himself, he, and such as he, would have brought on the whole land, but for the signal Judgment-Act of that never-to-be-

forgotten, always-to-be-thankfully-remembered-day.

"With regard to the girl and boy, we must hold a close council for their further disposing of. For, from the aforesaid General's ill-timed ruth about their father, having made it cogent they should not return to his kinsman's charge, we must be careful none of the old leaven of gentility have a finger on them hereafter. Meanwhile, I send the papers to Harry Ireton for his wise-hearted meditations. And rest myself, in all events, the Commonwealth's humblest of devoted servants, under the high calling laid upon the shoulder of its less profitable in deed than will, O. C.

NOTE THIRD.

"Having read, and carefully considered the papers, I heartily subscribe to the opinion of His Excellency the Lord-General, that we cannot hold ourselves secure from new disturbances, unless this intriguing priest be prevented stealing abroad to execute to the full of his

power the testamentary injunctions of his master, only hinted at in the herewith papers. And that he has held back more than he has told, or even implied herein, from some suspicion of the packet not reaching his correspondent in safety, we have a right to conclude, by our not finding inclosed by this *first opportunity* the George for the young Charles Stuart, which Juxton mentions at the end of his letter as having been put into his hand for such a purpose by the criminal when disrobing on the scaffold.

"You observe, the cunning prelate was not unconscious of the relic's sterling value; for, on the business being over, he remarks, that 'in his confusion of grief and hurry to conceal the glittering of the diamonds, which he had not sufficiently wrapped from sight in the collar attached when put into his hand, he dropped the George and the duplicate of the warrant together (the latter he had been obliged, by an order of the council, to hold before the condemned till the stroke was given), and when he caught

them up again, though they had fallen on a part thickly sawdusted, he found both the one and the other spotted with blood.' And then mark his observation, 'The imperishable *brilliant within could not be stained*, but the blue of the ribbon was dyed red.'

"Turn to his pages, and make due account of his mischief-brewing soothsaying on those circumstances. But having the prophecy and the prophet in our own hands, it is our easy business, and let it be done while it is easy, to disappoint the one, and seal up the other. Therefore my vote is, not only to incarcerate Juxton, but to give him a little taste of the ancient inquisitorial fashions of his cloth, till he disgorges his hidden booty of the George, and also makes a clear confession of the whole import of the word *remember*, so emphatically pronounced by his master, he says, when putting the bauble into his hand. In short, we must have every secret from him confided by the tyrant during those two last days of his life.

"The children certainly ought to be looked to more jealously than might have been worth while, had not these pernicious seeds been sown in their minds by the evil one; but the commonwealth's fathers must step with caution here; the common populace being apt to play the fools when the disposal of unfledged birds come in the way.

"The commonwealth's true man,

"H. I."

At the end of all was written, but by a very hasty scrambling hand, though in the same hand-writing as the first note, the following sort of postscript, evidently to the betrayer of the packet, to whom also it appeared the preceding notes were in part addressed.

"Right well-beloved citizen brother,

"Above thou wilt see our three opinions on thy good service to the commonwealth, and according thereunto thou wilt square thy farther zeal. First, without need of parley, procure us some bold fellow thou *canst trust* to take our mea-

sures with the old prelate. Masqued if *he will*, so he do but our business. For the boy and girl, they *are in our hands*, hence we may safely wait our leisure for their disposal. The people are the gainers by their losses, so would rather not be troubled with further thoughts about them. It was different when the *Who shall have?* lay between two tyrants. Then, 'the babes in the wood' made an appeal against no other man's interests, and honest John O'Oaks and Tom O'Stiles made joint cause against the usurper over the helpless. Now the balance lies between John and Tom's children, and these very brats. The inference is obvious. We shall see thee in private conference at night. Let it be where you named. The moon favours it well.

"Jo. B. P."

Betha having thus finished the reading of the whole, laid down the paper of the last note with a deepened shudder at the idea of all that was now actually before her; therefore with more horror of the per-

son, whoever he might be, who had betrayed the packet into the power of the unhappy orphans' enemies. She felt redoubled anxiety to learn who that treacherous person could have been; and also to find from Gervase how it were possible, if only the three counsellors who signed the notes and the betrayer of the packet knew of its detention, it could have come into any room of that house? With an indeed shrinking eye she had recurred to the fatal warrant; and, at a glance, saw the signatures there of Jo. Bradshawe, and O. Cromwell, and H. Ireton, to be the same hand-writing with those of the corresponding initials signed to the notes. But her fingers instinctively drew backwards, and her eye-lids convulsively closed, when she recognised that only the black crossings over certain dates and names, meant to be obliterated, were ink blots; the other dark spots on one side of its border, the note of Cromwell's son-in-law had too truly explained as from another cause.

She turned sick at heart while hastily

refolding the papers in their old envelope; indeed, with the pang of a suspicion that suddenly shot across her. But repelling it, she cried out to herself, "No! no! God forgive me, for the undutiful, sacrilegious thought! for no just intentions can excuse treachery."

And then, deeming it probable that some evil-minded acquaintance of her father might have been the traitor; and, coming to the house on other business, by some extraordinary accident had left the fatal packet, totally unknown to her father, in that drawer. Thus having settled it to a daughter's pious wish, she was mourning over the various possible occasions, in such dangerous times, where good men become so mixed with the bad, that the ill actions of the one were often attributed to the other; and, moreover, that the bad seemed so often to confound the judgments of the best intentioned, that they took the wrong instead of the right path; hence bringing a ban rather than a blessing on the best cause;—when, bethinking herself of the true wisdom of

the injunction, "Avoid the defiled, if ye would escape contamination!" and likening its spirit to the enunciation of our Divine Teacher, "He who prefers father or brother before me is unworthy of me!"—a light seemed to strike on the subject of her anxious conjectures; but it was a gloomy one; for the shade would be yet on her race, though not on her parent.

She felt, indeed, how far different was the cause from that above meant, which was then setting the numerous kindreds of England at variance; but the image of a brother her father had always considered unworthy of his confidence, her uncle Leonard, at once rushed on her mind as the probable perpetrator of an act of such utter abandonment of all probity of principle.

"Yes, yes," was now the response to this suspicion; "it must have been Leonard! He must have taken the trust from General Fairfax; for was he not a soldier in his army? And who so likely for the relenting General to confide it to; and believe, if he promised so, that

he would despatch the packet safely to his brother, Sir Eustace? who, like my beloved mother, had often been bounteous to him in his extravagancies. But, oh, unhappy Leonard, he must have sold his conscience to those wicked men! —And here, alas! is his trust!—No one else could have left it in such perilous carelessness any where!"

Betha knew little herself of her uncle, having seldom seen him; but from many persons she had heard of his gay, dissipated courses; and, both from her mother and Dame Mildred, had been told of his frequently haunting her father, wherever he might be found; persecuting him for large unreasonable sums, to support his expenses, long after his own inherited means were clean gone. She also knew her mother had often pleaded for him, pitying his errors. But they were errors still;—and too likely to have given birth to the desperate resources to which the insatiable cravings of vice hurry its slave.

Grievous as this conclusion might be,

it was much less so than the idea that her father could have been the treacherous confidant; and locking the packet within a little casket, in which she kept all the articles most precious to her; with the exhausted sensations of one who had run a breathless and painful journey, she first uttered her fervent prayers to Heaven for the protection of the innocent, wherever they might be; and then hastened to the repose and sweet oblivion of the blameless sleep.

CHAP. X.

The next morning saw Betha out in the garden with the mower's scythe: for, blameless as her tender conscience assuredly was with regard to all harm to the subjects of her reading the night before, the sad details had so possessed her dreams, and with such distressing images, that her rest was disturbed; waking frequently to a half-recollection of having been in a fearful sleep, and sinking to slumber again only to be revisited by the same appalling visions.

In one she saw her uncle Leonard, with his arms bared to the elbows, and an axe in his hands, uplifted over the prostrate and dead body of a man, who was already decapitated. At first she thought it was the King's body; and a young lady who sat close to it, wiping up the flowing blood with her hair, was the Princess Elizabeth; but all at once

she discovered that the beheaded person was her father; and, no more seeing the young lady, she found herself mourning over the ghastly form instead; and with the horror she woke, bathed in a dew of terror; which did not leave her till the sun rose, and herself also, to seek a sure refuge against the phantoms of superstition in a second pouring forth of her confiding spirit to the Almighty Guardian of all creatures, both when they sleep and when they wake.

And that apprehension for real objects now displacing visionary dismay should not be suffered longer than she might have power to dispel, she resolved to join the old gardener in his morning paths as soon as possible, and question him strictly on what he knew of the packet in any way, or could rationally conjecture concerning the circumstance of its being found under that roof.

The morning was peculiarly fine; the whole fragrance of the most luxuriantly-floral month in early summer, embalming the air on every side from flower-banks of

a thousand hues, and wreathing honeysuckles; while other blooming bindwiths twisted round the mossy stems of the slenderer trees which had not been lopped quite to the roots, and now with vainly-aspiring off-sets interlaced their lightly-sprouting branches amongst the odorous tendrils of this loveliest tapestry of nature; all seemed her gala hour: and the matin hymn in earth and sky, and even the silver flowing of the little rills that trickled from the ivy-covered, half-obscured, and by almost all but their new mistress quite forgotten, fairy fountain-urns, seemed full of nature's sweet thanks-givings. Betha felt that voice in every cheered pulsation of her heart, and rambled long amongst those beautiful garden wildernesses, with no other companions than the happy birds, chirping from spray to spray, and shaking the freshening dew on her upward face, even "like tear-drops from the morn's bright eyelids!" as she looked up, answering their gladdening notes, with her gratulatory smiles.

At last, Gervase appeared along the

high lawn-parterre, the favourite spot of his labour, it being there most of his cherished remembrances dwelt. He blessed the lady at sight of her from a distance, and blessed her when she drew near, for having received his precious packet, and he trusted would now take charge of it for its rightful owner; for he told her that last night he had made a long and refreshing sleep, the like of which he had not tasted since the awful deposit of that packet had fallen into his hands.

Betha felt compensated for her broken slumbers by this account of their having purchased the good rest of the poor old man; but at the same time she owned that before she could consent to retain the packet to indeed her entire possession, for any future hope of restoring it to its intended point, she must if possible be resolved in two or three circumstances.— "Did he know to whom it had been intrusted?"

"No," answered Gervase: "I found it where I told your ladyship, and I know no more; but it can hardly be

doubted that the traitorous person who had it in charge brought it here. How else could it come, for the reasons your ladyship mentions?"

Betha wished to put another question, yet a certain degree of apprehension, and of conscious shame, at what might be the answer, for a moment deterred her; but summoning courage from a principle of restitution to the injured, as far as might be in her feeble power, she spoke again.

"Did any of my uncle Leonard's lawless companions ever come to this house about that time?"

Betha blushed to crimson when she had uttered this, for she felt she had prevaricated her own meaning: for it was not any companion of her uncle's she suspected; and she found at her heart the grasping pang of a near kinsman's deserved disgrace, and that she then stood less in her own eyes, by such cruel connection with the self-dishonoured, if it should prove so, than the poorest dependent on her father's bounty, whose name had only poverty to humble it.

"Madam! my lady?" returned he, in

a tone expressive of having caught something of her own suspicion, from the style of her question, "it may have been! — But, craving your pardon, it must have been his own self, — for he did come twice or thrice, sure enough; and he was not in the use of it before, since my honoured lady left; and he was closeted with his worship, I now remember, in the room where I afterwards found the packet. The first time, he went away looking very angry: the second (for I let him out always at the back gate), he seemed mainly blithe, but so flustered I might have deemed he had been taking wine, if I had not known his worship of a long while had not kept a drop in the cellars here: and the last time he came and went away, it was on a right noble horse: he was dressed gay and gallant as in former days, and looked full handsome for such a dissipated gentleman; he threw a commonwealth broad piece to my son, and bade him "go buy absolution of the Devil!" But his words were often dissolute, like himself; yet his honour was kindly, liberal, and merry; and though we

were sorry, we did not much mind that speech then. But now, O sweet lady, you have made me think that he had then sold his precious soul to the commonwealth, for the lucre he would throw away the very next day, he knew not how, on evil men and evil women! — and so for a coffer of ill-gotten gold betrayed the good bishop and his own brother; and such a brother, too! the fastest friend he ever had! For I well know from Master Leonard's man, as sore a rake as the young gentleman himself, that Sir Eustace sent him full purses many times and oft; and a brother's advice with them to demean himself more like their noble father. It was after he had spent all the patrimony left him in his mad pranks with the London apprentices; and then how did he extol my generous master, who was only half his blood, and break out against ——; but it is no matter. The contemners of God's laws are never to be trusted; so it seems plain Sir Thomas Fairfax, who rued his depth in the iniquity, may have thought well enough of Master

Leonard to believe he would be faithful to his brother; but instead he must have brought the packet straight here, to give it up to his cruellest enemies, and so strike hands with President Geoffrey, who, your pardon, lady! never had ruth for man or woman that moved a finger against the present rulers."

Betha felt she could not be displeased with the honest creature's respectful frankness; for she well knew her father's intolerance of all he considered hostile to the continuance of the commonwealth; and therefore, with her eyes downcast indeed, and a sigh accompanying her words, she briefly replied, "Every man must act by his principles, Gervase: but proceed with your account."

He resumed, "It was a day or two after I last saw him here; and also after the last meeting of some of the commonwealth lords with his worship, your father, in the old library, that his worship made the final tearing of all the papers there; and then leaving the place to me to clear, and lock up the room, I lit on

the packet in the way I mentioned before; and they, or any body of them, might have locked these old limbs to the torture, but they never should have got from me again what I found therein, and directed for my honoured lord! Therefore, lady, if you would have my poor soul rest in the grave, be you faithful to your uncle Sir Eustace, and hold that packet safe for him as a sort of ransom on your part, for the sin of those—whoever they may be—who held it back from him!"

Betha's sadly-bewildered spirit caught at this idea; for she could not but see, whoever were the first betrayer of the packet, that her father was some way engaged in its detention. Again she sighed; but addressing Gervase, and with more earnest solemnity than she was aware of, assured him that it should be so! she would preserve the trust he had confided to her with all the fidelity she did feel her conscience commanded her.

Gervase would have dropped on his aged knees before her at this declaration;

but she prevented him, and his grateful tears only bathed her hand: her own fell too; for in proportion as she discerned her father's probable concern in the train of events that packet gave obscurely notice of, she became anxious to deprecate, by the fullest immolation of herself, if that could do any good to the injured, any part of the awful judgments denounced on the afflictors of the afflicted by the Holy Judge of all men; and therefore her solicitude redoubled to learn how much of the evil threatened in the notes of those cruel judges had really been executed.

The date at the head of the first note by President Bradshawe was February 23. 1649, a little more than three weeks after the day of the grievous scene described. Two years, then, had elapsed since the papers were written, and during that time Betha did not recollect the names of either of the two royal children having been mentioned in her hearing by any of the persons who had occasionally in discourse with one or other of her

parents, in her presence, talked of any public circumstances succeeding the King's death. Hence she could only know the actual fate of the young Prince and his sister by enquiring of Gervase.

She had asked him whether he thought the pages which were missing of the Bishop's letter, had been lost amongst the other fragments of paper on the floor of the room, when the packet fell from the drawer, and the contents flew out. Gervase could not satisfy himself that there was not a probability they had. But the last page of the letter, as it stood in her possession, being rent just where a new subject began, the greater likelihood appeared to her to be, that some of the council of three, at their intended sitting on the business had taken away those pages for some purpose; perhaps to intimidate the Bishop with the sight of his own hand-writing!

However that might be, Betha's chief anxiety at that moment was to learn how far the decisions of that council, — most probably held under her father's roof—

had implicated the personal safety of those unhappy children; but her first question towards this object was asking Gervase, whether he knew what had become of the venerable writer of the account?

He briefly replied, that "he believed the good Bishop had never seen the light of day beyond his prison walls ever since; and for the two royal orphans, there had been a talk of the commonwealth lords making the King's daughter waiting-maid to Madam Ireton, the Lord-General's daughter; and the little Prince to be bound apprentice to some handicraft trade; but the young lady fell ill, and was sent to the sea-side for air, and her brother with her; for he took bad in the same fever; and they had no better attendance than a poor negro woman, who had also served the King their father for very reverence of him, when his proud jailer of Carisbrook took his own servants from him. But whether both the sweet children died there, or were taken off one moonlight night in a fishing-smack,

which came over from Holland, and running into a creek on that side of the Isle of Wight, close to the lone house where they were under the charge of two well-armed men, nobody can rightly tell; for the boat went off again, full sail, before morning; and those two men were never heard of afterwards, nor the children seen — nor the negro-woman either. So it is the belief of some of us, who privately wished them well, that the poor things are safe with their royal mother in France; and if the commonwealth lords winked at the matter, so much the less evil on their heads hereafter! And I think it the more that it is so, from one day hearing a parliament soldier jesting with a comrade in the redoubt yonder, and then he said, that ——

"By earth or sea, he had lost a pretty prize! for he had intended to have asked His Excellency the Lord General, for Elizabeth Stuart to wife; which would have been even a better settlement to royal pretensions, than holding madam Ireton's pin-box. But now, slow measures

had allowed so notable an example to slip through their fingers; and he could only laugh at the folly of the wise."

"Vile! vile!" returned Betha. "Such wantonness with fallen greatness is indeed enough to make the worse appear the better cause! But may Heaven grant it is as you say, that the bereaved Henrietta has had the comfort of receiving those poor orphans to her arms! And, if not, they are now where no more sorrow, no more insult can reach them."

Happier they than those who triumph where they fell, she thought, when she closed her conversation with Gervase. For either way their destiny, she felt they had found a shelter and repose. And her soothed emotions calmed, as if the wing of an angel had passed there.

CHAP. XI.

It was soon after this conference between the daughter of Geoffrey Baldry, and the old and faithful retainer of his expatriated brother's still cherished memory in his no longer home, that the news came there of the late tyrant's eldest son, not only having been invited over to Scotland by certain powerful clans, but of his arrival; and that a large army rallied round him, to establish his right there at least, and crown him king.

But with these same tidings came others, in counterpoise to the silently-elated hearts of Gervase and his son Hugh. Still larger armies were sent by the commonwealth into the north, to overturn his new throne there, and drive him and his adherents either into the sea, or again to the refuge of foreign charity.

Every day brought fresh reports of

the varying circumstances of the contest from Dunbar to London; but they did not always reach the retired boundaries of Matchelowe Court: and thus its simple inhabitants, who took any interest in the issue, usually remained rather dependent on the arm that fighteth unseen for the victory, than on the swelling or falling away of the ranks on either side.

Betha may be said to have held her wishes in *abeyance;* she had only prayers to offer for the peace of all; and they were the morning and the evening incense from the pure altar of her guileless heart.

Thus, then, was the sweet summer month of June gliding its balmy days over the pensive head of Geoffrey's gentle daughter — nature her almost seraph-speaking solace, when, avoiding even the venerable herald of her walks, she walked abroad into the deeper seclusions of the domain, and, wandering alone, gathered the shade-hid dell-flowers, fragile and lovely, which the culturer would have plucked and thrown away, as wild or weedy. But no bud or blossom passed

unprized before the grateful eye of Betha; herself, it might be said, a fairer than them all —

> "The modest virtues, mingling in her eyes,
> Still on the ground, reflective, darting all
> Their brightest beams into the blooming flowers."

After one of these noon-day walks, whence, indeed, she had stretched away by a cross path to the little village of Matchelowe, to pay a visit to certain old and helpless pensioners of hers, to whom she often personally ministered with the tender simplicity of unostentatious benevolence, she turned her steps even gaily homeward; for light is the heart which feels itself the carrier to and fro of relief and comfort. And on entering the house with the spring of youth, and an almost carol of her rejoicing soul upon her lip, smilingly she asked for Dame Mildred.

She flew into the room where the good dame usually sate, bearing with her her gathered flowers and some needle-work; tributes from the cottagers at Matchelowe for her monitress. But, to the surprise of

Betha, she did not find her alone; and it was President Baldry who was sitting with her. His daughter started at sight of him; for she had already been upwards of eight months in that seclusion, and though only so few miles from London, he had scarcely visited her more than twice. Therefore it was the start of surprise; but with the respectful welcoming of a revering daughter, she immediately approached him, and, as was the filial manner of those times, asked his blessing.

He laid his hand, smiling, on her bended head, and pronouncing the paternal benediction, instantly turned to Dame Mildred, with as evident surprise on his part, and complimented her care on the carnation bloom of his hitherto too delicate child.

Betha, meanwhile, stood with a fluctuation of that bloom, fading and kindling again into all the variety of tints belonging to that beautiful flower; while her dutifully apprehensive heart was at task with herself, in the shrinking consciousness of having engaged herself in a trust, that

must, if fulfilled, hold her in a continued course of concealments from her only parent. His presence, animated, dignified — cordial to Mildred, kind to herself — seemed to reassure her, that the cause which he embraced must be "wisest, best," or, at any rate, though he might be rigid in justice, he could not be capable of intentional, deliberate cruelty. And she began to regret the implicit confidence she had given to the found packet, and to the subsequent commentaries of a partial, and probably ignorant old man, received as equal in credit to the parts that were wanting. In short, the presence of her father not only made its own impression on her habitual filial reverence, but recalled the image of her mother, and all the lessons of both in her happy childhood, when her faith and her opinions, she thought, must needs be as theirs, and she believed there could not be a more infallible tribunal under heaven.

But in her seclusion of Matchelowe a veil had been rent, which showed hideous spectres where they had described

the ministers of paradise; and she had begun to think for herself, to deplore the erroneous judgments of those she most honoured, while weeping the irremediable calamities such direful misleadings had produced. But her father re-appeared before her, and the curtain as he had painted it at once seemed closed over all again, by the very spell of his voice. Had she, then, been walking in the vain shadow of a troubled imagination? Had the wildfire of credulity in her solitude lured her to the brink of a real disobedience of the heart? At this moment her thoughts, bewildered by the present touched affections of her tender nature, could only tremble at that nature's weakness, and address a silent sigh to the Searcher of all hearts, to guide her as became a Christian maiden through the labyrinth into which she was then too conscious of having involved herself.

President Geoffrey, meanwhile, little conjecturing the cause of her timid and confused answers to his questions concerning the manner of her passing her

time in such complete rustication, began inwardly to apprehend that the retirement she had been sent to for the season of her sorrow had entirely unfitted her to bear any part in the society to which he now wished to introduce her. Her person, indeed, had improved in soft, feminine loveliness; but her demeanour appeared to him more that of an inexperienced, abashed child, than when he first parted from her. However, he informed her that he had come to prepare her to take a share, as his daughter, in an entertainment he was about giving to the family of the Lord General, in celebration of His Excellency's recent victories in Scotland over the young usurper there, whom he had driven into the mountain deserts of that country, to be pursued hereafter as the British army found themselves disposed to take him prisoner, or allow him a fugitive's passage to escape again by sea.

Mildred spread her neat mittened hand on her snowy-kerchiefed bosom, and thanked Heaven for the triumphant tidings.

Betha could not but cast a thought on poor Gervase when she heard this; and submissively bowing her head, answered her father that she was at his command.

He continued to say, that his principal guests being the lady of Ireton the Lord Deputy of Ireland, and who was the eldest daughter of His Excellency Cromwell, and her two younger sisters, the Ladies Mariam and Frances, maidens of high decorums, it was expedient that his own daughter, young and timid as she might be, should be brought forward to sanction with due respect the visit of those ladies to his city mansion. Hence, with a tone of parental encouragement, and at the same time with a manner he meant should be flattering to Betha's girlish ideas of patriotism, he told her she must put off her mourning-weeds, to pay just honours to the daughters of the man who had not merely given her country freedom, but whose wisdom was likely to raise it to the highest pitch of power amongst the nations.

Betha's eyes became humid at this intimation respecting her mourning weeds: and her father soon discerned the stealing drop from under the downcast eyelid.

"Nay, my child," said he, "you are dutiful, and would desire to venerate your mother's memory in the way she would most approve? Your father tells you, that will be by putting on the garments of gladness whenever called upon to show due reverence to the family of him who gave the Commonwealth to England!"

He then bade her recollect that she would have her watchful monitress to assist her in the ceremonies of the reception. And he exhorted her to prepare herself to greet his fair guests with the best-remembered courtesies her mother (who had been eminently graceful) ever taught her; and particularly to direct her most endearing and respectful attentions to the Lady Mariam Cromwell, "who," he added, "possessed more of

her mother's truly Roman spirit than any woman he had ever known."

As he continued, he discovered that no awkwardness degraded the timidity of his daughter. Nor did that modesty of nature arise from any feebleness in the intellect that listened to what he said with so silent and submissive attention. According to what was then passing in his mind, this view of her character pleased him better than one of more apparently womanly maturity; and he proceeded with increased animation to explain some other peculiar circumstances of this intended entertainment.

It was to usher in the re-institution of the great festival, and re-planting of the long-famous city watch, which had been sometime disused on account of the expensiveness of the establishment, and also from the extraordinary peaceable times during the reign immediately preceding the last. Now, however, that war had set its foot on British shores again, and the most subtle of all wars, an intestine contest, where no one could

guess where an ambush might lie, it was thought fit to revive the old city watch; an efficient body of stout citizens, drawn from the different wards, who, armed with "bill and broadsword," in ancient times had been the best-trusted guardians of the night. And it was decided to be done more particularly at the present season, on account of much suspicion being afloat, of certain malignants yet remaining secretly lurking in the city and suburbs, against whom no check would abide to overawe, should any occasion occur to summon the brave train-bands to share their brethren's glories in the north.

This measure was no sooner resolved on, —privately suggested, indeed, from the Lord-General himself in that quarter,— than President Geoffrey (the tacit comptroller of all in the city), being the secret friend to whom Cromwell had imparted his desire for the measure, and having carried it against the shrinking purses of some of his compatriots even by the heavy make-weight of throwing his own, with the whole deficiency, into the

scale, he as immediately determined to turn it yet more to his own account, by making it an occasion of giving a tribute of honour to the Lord-General himself, by enlarging the magnificence of the show to a splendour that had never been seen from its first institution, even in the times when kings and queens came to its yearly setting. But while all should be done with the ostensible proclamation of safety to the city, and worthy celebration of the commonwealth's faithful servant's victories, Geoffrey smiled in himself; knowing the real point with him was to make his way to the good-liking of one especially of the so-honoured present; in whom, he much misjudged her, if such open homage to the great protecting power of her father, would not create a propitious beat of heart towards the man who had first dared to make a public show of the deserved supremacy of the winner of those victories! If so, he knew where the ladder of ambition now stood, and his foot would soon be high on its mountings.

But much of this, as may be supposed, was in the closet of his own thoughts. He only talked to Dame Mildred and his daughter of what the city watch had been, what it was to be again, and of the honest emulations he felt, to show, that as his own ancestor, Thomas Baldry, gave the finest city watch parade that ever had been seen, to Queen Anne Bullen and King Harry Tudor, he, a commonwealth-man, would yet more nobly entertain the family of the first republican in the world, and fairer faces too, than ever royal bride had set forth at his old mansion-window in West Cheap.

Betha saw her father was in high spirits; she had never found him so communicative with her before; and as he proceeded in describing the new civic honours conferred on himself, and the preparations he was setting on foot for the pending festival, her own pleasurable feelings received the impulse of his; and she smiled with him, and promised him all the cheerful duty in such a scene which her youth and inexperience could

perform. At parting, he embraced her — a caress he had seldom bestowed on her since her very childhood — and whispering some order to Dame Mildred, smilingly withdrew.

Dame Mildred did not neglect that order; for she was proud of the loveliness of her pupil, and elated at the idea of presenting her to the sober-suited matrons of the commonwealth, as a daughter worthy the chaste demeanor of the not less lovely and virtuous mother now in her grave. For no thought entered the simple-minded dame's head of the marriage-dream, then in vision before the scarcely twelvemonth widower of her deceased mistress; he, who musing loftily on its sure verification, was then riding gaily through the moss-greened gateways of desolated Matchelowe, casting not a thought behind.

The fact was, that he had some reason to believe that the Lord-General, who had given his eldest daughter to Ireton only because of his clear head in the field and the council, would not refuse

the hand of Mariam, her sister, to the sole proprietor of the whole wealth (the sinews of power) of the rich house of Baldry and its dependencies; not only to be a link to ensure future golden aids from the same source, but as a sort of easy-paid equivalent for all the secret-service-money, Geoffrey had already bestowed on the exigencies of the Lord-General's movements, public or private, from his first buckling on a sword to realise the dream of a commonwealth, to its bold acomplishment, and then triumphant hour.

President Baldry, therefore, being pretty confident in his claims on the father, his present machinery was laid to win the daughter's concurrence; whom he thought he knew sufficient of to ascertain that she might be dazzled by the splendour of his condition, not to perceive any very hostile disparity of mutual attractiveness between a young beauty of nineteen, and a man still in the prime of life, that had not yet seen fifty.

When he respectfully preferred his

suit to the wife of Ireton (to whom he was careful not to betray the secret of his views on Mariam), in invitation of herself and her sisters to the new setting of the watch, that lady had objected to the indecorum of bringing spinster damsels to the house of a man who had no lady there of his family to receive them with due propriety. It was then the idea of bringing Betha from her nearly-forgotten retreat suggested itself; and in the same instant he overcame the scruples of her excellency the Lady Deputy of Ireland, by informing her that his daughter, though still little more than a child, should be present, with her monitress, to give all honourable welcome to the noble ladies he then sued to receive.

The city, meanwhile, was apprised of the proposed festival to accompany the ancient grand pageantries of setting of the watch; and the preparations for facilitating and partaking both, occupied the inhabitants from ward to ward.

CHAP. XII.

At last the evening came. It was the vigils of St. Peter. Betha had held her own vigils during the few nights that intervened between the visit of her father and this momentous evening; momentous in her idea, because it was to introduce her to that world of men and women, called society; and in which she so strangely, at her age, felt no power within her to mingle; and yet she owned a curiosity to see and hear what such a world was, could she but have done so without the penalty of being seen herself, and looked upon as one of the sharers in that society.

But those were not all her meditations during the interval. She had re-read the papers in her casket; she had weighed their contents with her recent impressions on re-meeting her father; and the

result was a deep conviction, and as deep a commiseration of fallen human nature. Black, indeed, was the proof of a direful chain of wrongs she then held in her hand. But the wrongs on the other side, she had no list of them; yet if that train were made out, might it not counterbalance the others in all but the direful murder?

"Murder!"—Perhaps this was the first time that the death-blow of Charles Stuart had been called, even in thought, by that simple name of lawless violence. But it was a term of simple fact which Betha's innocent lips, in her solitary reflections, had uttered; and she repeated it with a shudder; reiterating her thanks to her Heavenly Father that her earthly parent's hand nor seal had not taken any place on the frightful warrant for the deed, that turned "the fair cause dark."

An almost unremitted rain since the morning of the President's visit, having prevented Betha's usual walks, she did not meet Gervase again until the day of the intended festival, and then she told

him of the revived spectacle she was to see.

"O lady!" returned he, "I have heard of it; and that it has other celebration, too, besides the setting of the old watch. The Better Wisdom's will be done! It would ill become a poor sinner like me to murmur when He scourges nations! But may he guard you, sweet mistress, wherever you go!"

"My spirit thanks thee, good Gervase," replied she: "for, in these times, I feel we have all much need of each other's prayers."

Soon after, they parted; and she returned to the house, to her little quiet dinner with Dame Mildred, previous to the novel purpose with them of preparing for a gay and populous gala scene.

Betha's raiment for the occasion had been chosen and sent by her father, therefore caused no thought to her, or to her monitress, for what she ought to select for herself as most proper; and when the dame appeared in her pupil's tiring-room in her own chosen festival dress, she showed

the stern severity of a true commonwealth-woman, in the style of what she had put on: the fabrick, indeed, was a silk, rich to stiffness; but the colour was grave, and the fashion plain, without ruff or furbelow either on her matron neck or white lawn hood.

Betha was altogether clad in the same spotless hue as the venerable woman's coif; but it was of a point-lace that might have challenged the bridal garments of Anne Bullen to match its cost and rarity. — It covered her bosom even to the bottom of her throat, where it met a string of pearls of similar value, and then it shaded her arms to her wrists, where pearls again clasped it, in the manner of the dress of very young girls of that period. Her beautiful hair, bright and glossy as the chesnut, and which it was the usage then in womanhood to coil up in plaits around the head, leaving much of the forehead bare, and displaying the well-turned neck, was ordered by her father to be loosened this night, to flow in its natural tresses over her shoulders even

to the ribbon of her slender waist, and to wave over her brow in the same unrestrained freedom she wore it at her girlish age of fourteen: indeed, when so arrayed, Betha, from the delicacy of her contour and height, however exquisite the just symmetry of her proportions, might at first glance be mistaken for one not much past that almost childish period; therefore, when dressed, she was delighted and grateful to her father's kind consideration, in thus, by retreating her back two or three years of her inexperienced life, sheltering her from the station that would have been required of her, had she been brought forward as the matured representative of her mother in such a scene; and it was with increased pleasure she found that her venerated monitress was to fulfil the hospitable duties of that ever-beloved parent, to take whose revered seat in any way, much more on a day of festival, would have been a hard pang to her daughter; therefore with soothed feelings, and even cheered spirits at such proofs of tenderness to her from her fa-

ther, she nerved herself to revisit her old home, even on such a day, for the first time since her mother's death.

A little before dusk, a small closed-up carriage came from President Baldry to conduct his daughter and Dame Mildred to his city mansion; but attended by unliveried servants only, that the short journey might be made without the equipage being recognised by the populace. The carriage windows being shuttered by trellis merely, and the glasses down for air, those within could discern objects without, though themselves were unseen; and as it travelled on from the grass-grown gateways of Matchelowe Court down through the village of Lomesbury, and along the Holbourne high road towards London, Betha became much interested in observing what she saw.

First, the humble, quiet evening scene of the village, where a few old men were driving the lowing cattle through the barrier-bars, back into the open fields after milking, while through the unclosed doors of the cottages she perceived the dame

of each frugal habitation preparing supper for its aged master against his return. The girls were mostly sitting under the projecting eves; some singly spinning, with the younger children playing at their feet; others in groups, talking laughingly or gravely over their work; with a brightly-silvering moon shining cheerily over all. No one there seemed to think of what might be passing in a busier world.

But when the carriage turned into the great road of Holbourne, skirted by its several noble country mansions, with their courts or garden-lawns spreading before them, Betha then saw every gate open, from the old porch of Furnival's-Inn to the magnificent porticoes of Ely-palace and Hatton-house, whence persons of different ranks, but all with apparently the same eager object, were crowding forth, directing their faces towards the city.

Betha drew a double source of reflections alleviatory of the uneasy state of her opinions on the two subjects then most deeply couched in her young heart, from

ideas these crowds suggested to her: she was pleased at the general curiosity, which she deemed a simultaneous reverence to her father; and, therefore, a proof of their respectful sense of his performing a duty, in thus celebrating the victories of the Lord-General on so favourable an occasion: "and assuredly (she thought), the owners of those stately mansions, whoever they were, must be the nobles of the land; and if they allowed their retainers to throng in this manner to a triumph of the commonwealth, they bore their testimony, that, however the past rigours might be deplored, they had not been executed without the urgent motive of trying at least to equalise justice, without respect to persons!"

This, indeed, was all well, as far as Betha had means of drawing her judgment; but she knew not, that the lords of some of those mansions were absent; some not gone very distant, only a little farther into the country, holding a sort of neutral part; others were passed to the Continent, and their homes taken possession of by new lords of the present

government; and others again being slain in the fields of the contest, or perishing on the scaffold, their houses became the natural inheritance of the conquerors.

While the carriage drove on, the sun was still casting his upward beams, tracking the horizon with a soft pearly light, and meeting the undulating line of grey hills towards the north as if with a silvery crownlet. But those hills blazed with a different brightening crest on several of them. Bonfires were kindling by the little bands of soldiers on outpost there, in honour of that night. And on the highest point of Highgate in particular, waved a prodigiously-large standard, proclaiming in huge golden letters on its crimson surface, the late signal victory over the Scots, and the capture of their maiden-city Edinburgh, whilst its vast evolving volumes, like a gigantic banner of Bellona's own weaving, seemed to sweep the sky against which they were opposed, as if threatening even its serenity.

Betha was meditating on these objects,

when her vehicle suddenly snatched her from view of them, by entering the newly-bulwarked gateway into the city itself; and then carried her, jolting on over the rugged pavement of the narrow streets, rendered of an almost night-sombreness by the successive overhanging of the stories above stories of the houses; and thus they continued, till the carriage, driving beneath a lofty arch at the hither end of Paternoster-row, it entered West-cheap.

Betha was surprised to find that the wheels now moved noiselessly and smoothly on, though with increased rapidity; and the gloom of the pendent houses still preventing her at that dusky hour, though in a wider street, discerning what could be the reason of the change, she noticed the circumstance to her companion. Mildred, who had been as silently engaged in thought as herself, answered quickly: "It is owing to the soft sand his worship has had spread here, in honour of His Excellency's ladies. We cannot see it, because it would not

be proper for us to show ourselves by letting down the blinds; but I remember the same was done when the tyrant and his proud spouse paid their last visit to Guildhall."

This answer did not incline her pupil to ask any more questions. And as they drove along, Betha, musing as before, observed a throng moving on each side, shadowy, almost like forms of mist. She said to herself: "In like manner, doubtless, when the royal pageant was to be seen, these streets were crowded by the eager spectators. Where are they now? Many under the earth, in their cold graves, and to whom nothing on the earth is now any thing! else I might almost fancy I might so see their gray apparitions haunting the same spot, to behold the freedom of their children."

And then Betha's saddened imagination imaged her mother, who had, perhaps, looked out of her window, to see the royal cavalcade pass into Guildhall; and she too was gone, where no thought of

tyrant, nor ought else of this world, could trouble more!

These reflections, so unsuited to the gay spectacle she was going to take part in, were put to flight by the carriage rolling under the echoing, long-vaulted passage-way belonging to the city mansion of her father; and stopping at the great house-door, within the first quadrangle, she alighted amidst a throng of servants, all in the rich gown-liveries of his state,—purple velvet, faced and badged with gold lace, and massy insignia.

Betha could not recognise, in any object that met her eye, or any spot she trod on, the home of her childhood; the home she had quitted not twelve months before. The whole was one luminous region of splendour. The richest furniture, lit up with lights innumerable; and every where she set her little foot, she moved along brilliant tapestries of France, or carpets from the choicest looms of Persia and Constantinople. She gazed around her with a surprised admiration that had not words to express itself, while

passing through the lengthened saloon-galleries, and suite of superb rooms leading to the grand chamber of reception; and that she found occupied the whole front of the house, and was windowed to the street.

It was vacant of any company save themselves, when she and Mildred entered; but seemed prepared for a numerous assembly, by the lines of benches, covered with brocaded damasks, that stood against the walls, hung with the same glowing arras; while at the higher end of the room, one large picture occupied the whole space there, under a full draperied canopy of cloth of gold, looped and fringed with some gorgeous manufacture, and before which appeared three chairs of state. Betha, in approaching the picture, found herself arrested at these chairs by an extraordinary fragrance breathing round her, when her foot trod near them, or her hand touched their soft glittering cushions. She smiled and wondered, as if the effect were enchantment; but whatever were the perfume,

and such she had never inhaled before, she concluded, from her further observation, that it was combined with the material of the seats, and also with the downy, yet brilliant stuff, that carpeted the slightly-raised part of the room, ascended by a single step, where these chairs stood.

Mildred remarked, she had some memory of such scent being very costly, and hard to be purchased at all; and of its coming, she had heard, out of the pagodas far beyond India, whence a merchant once brought a box of it, no bigger than a pigeon's egg, but all set round with rubies, because of its rarity, and he gave it to her mistress, Betha's mother. The dame was therefore in amazement, at the quantity which must have been expended in filling the furniture before her with such incomparable odour. She also remembered that two brightly-kept old oaken chairs used to stand on that very spot; and she had heard Betha's grandfather, Philip Baldry, tell his new daughter-in-law, her mother, that King Henry Tudor, and his spouse Anne Bullen, had

sat in them, when they came to see the setting of the city watch, hardly much more than a hundred years from that time, and out of those very windows.

"Yon window in particular," continued Mildred, "where I see a fine balcony is built out over the street."

"But who can these other chairs, so much more costly, be for?" asked Betha. "There are no kings and queens to sit in them now!"

"No," replied her monitress; "and I marvel his worship did not displace the memorials of such gauds altogether. It ill betokeneth true folk to see the like here. Nor do I quite know what to think of such strange pomps, as the place shows every where. But the President never agreed with thy sober-minded mother in these respects, who always said, though very meekly, *of vanity cometh vexation of spirit!*"

And the good republican turned her back, with an air of abhorrence, on the gorgeous chairs; forgetting that it is not the cushion nor the elevated platform that makes the

seat a throne; nor is it the title of king that makes him who wears it a tyrant. Betha, no longer recollecting the picture she had approached to examine, was thinking of her "sober-minded," her noble-minded mother, and mechanically following her monitress from that part of the room, when she was roused to the business she came upon, by the clangour of hautboys and clarionets, and the clash of cymbals, suddenly resounding through the whole building.

A few moments afterwards, the sound of voices, not of steps, was heard in the adjoining grand gallery. For all who entered there, were indeed treading on velvet, that no vulgar noise might reach the ear of the guests, to interrupt its perception of their splendid host's harmonious heralds of announcement, and his own gallant welcome to the fair objects of the show, as they tripped lightly along his mirror-reflecting chambers. The folding-doors from that gallery into the reception-room were already wide open, or rather transformed into pavilion-draperies, shed-

ding the breath of Arabian roses on the brilliant group that entered.

Geoffrey Baldry himself led in Her Excellency the lady of Ireton. She was arrayed with a magnificence at which Betha as well as Mildred started. The whole of her dress was too dazzling to discriminate its parts, by reason of the profusion of jewels with which it was covered. He coif shone one blaze, rising up to a point, and from which pended a veil of such thin transparency, that as she moved, floating over the resplendent raiment beneath, it made her appear like an armed Minerva clad in light, but whose brightness was occasionally rendered more tolerable by the passing vapour of a snowy mist. She did, indeed, appear to Betha's natural propriety of taste more like a figure dressed for some character in the masque, than a lady habited according to her station, to be a spectatress. But while the astonished daughter of Geoffrey was thus absorbed, gazing on her father too, appointed like a prince,

and this entering personage, she did not distinguish the also sparkling group that followed them. And when they did advance into her view, it cannot be said she saw them, even then distinctly, for she felt confounded and confused, by the air of conscious superiority with which they moved; something like the claims of majesty. In short, like her monitress, she could not understand the splendour she beheld, all dedicated, now evidently, to the approaching party; nor the sort of transcendent style of apparel, and overawing mien, in these daughters of a republican general.

Betha's heart beat, her knees trembled, she knew not why; and in the midst of these embarrassing sensations, the group had advanced to her. Perhaps she had also moved a little towards them, by the instinctive motion of the habitual courtesy of her mind; for she found herself not standing by her monitress when she looked round to see her first presented to her father's guests; and she cast down her eyes yet more confused.——Mildred

had not stirred a step towards the living pageant.

Geoffrey took his agitated daughter by the hand, and introduced her to Her Excellency. The Lady of Ireton, who though little indebted to beauty herself, felt no envy of its possessor, smiled approvingly as her eye scanned the shrinking girl, with that perfect ease of self consequence which belongs to conscious privilege of eminent greatness alone.

"A pretty creature! master Baldry," exclaimed she; for the comprehensive inspection was made in one sweep of her good-natured glance; "tall and womanly for her age: not fifteen I think? and so sweetly bashful too!" And Her Excellency, with the tip of her feathered fan, patted the blooming cheek which her unreserved remarks and mistake of her age had covered with a succession of mantling blushes. The lady then put her hand into that of her host, to lead her to one of the chairs, to which she immediately turned as to the seat she expected. Geoffrey instantly placed her in the centre one.

And having said a few words of his lively sense of pleasure in her kind notice of his little motherless Betha, who would not have been drawn from her yet retirement with her respectable monitress, but to pay due honour to his present noble guests! he bowed, and turned round with apparent reluctance, but a most eager inward impatience, to give place to a train of military and other persons thronging forward, to take their homage-station by the chair of the wife of the Lord Deputy of Ireland.

Geoffrey gladly took advantage of the quick release, as if intending to offer the two vacant chairs to the other sisters; but when he rejoined the group where they still were, he found that Mariam Cromwell, the object whom he now particularly sought, not to conduct to a seat, but to detach to his own discourse alone, was yet retained by President Bradshawe, who had led her into the room; and who, by his loud talking, showed he had just introduced that lady and himself

to the indeed abashed daughter of their magnificent host.

Betha had not ventured to look up again from the yet abiding effects of the married sister's observations on her, till she was summoned to recover some presence of mind, by hearing a harsh and sarcastic-toned voice addressing her by the term "Fair Mistress Baldry!" She raised her eyes, with a backward step indeed, at so familiar an appellation; and met the bantering gaze of a tall, imposing-looking man, in a perfectly simple-fashioned dark-coloured gown or robe, with no other ornament than a large jewelled amethyst in the clasp at his neck. "Accept," said he, "the due reverence of John Bradshawe, thy father's humblest compatriot, and thy servant ever:—*maugre* an honest man's good faith to all as pretty maids of the commonwealth! Come, thy hand! No offence to coyness. I only want to wed it here to as dainty a damsel forsooth as thyself!"

Betha had shrunk at the name of

Bradshawe; for she remembered that it was the first she had seen signed on the death-sealed warrant in her possession. It was not possible, indeed, for him to guess the cause of that recoil in a daughter of Geoffrey Baldry; of the catch of repugnance with which she snatched away the hand he had attempted to take; therefore, deeming the action what he had said, a girl's silly shyness, where nothing but a jesting kind of compliment was meant, he spoke his concluding words in a tone of rebuke; and seizing her hand with the determination of a man that would not be opposed, even in trifles, he put it rather roughly into that of his fair companion, adding, "There, there! I must now look after more stubborn stuff." And, without a more ceremonious leave to either lady, turned away amongst the thickening crowd.

Betha did not feel the hand in which hers had been placed close in the least over it, nor give any sign of kindly encouragement to the so-manifestly agitated

young novice its owner; neither did Mariam Cromwell utter a word. But the poor Betha, while yet in the embarrassing situation in which she had been left, heard a buzz around her in half whispers, full of admiring phrases of the loveliness and modesty of one of the two. Far from attributing any of them to herself, she found such refuge in referring them all to the very conspicuous beauty of the lady before whom she stood, that it enabled her to rally her self-command sufficiently to curtsy respectfully, yet confusedly still, as she withdrew her so coldly-received hand. But in rising from her gentle obeisance and turning away, her timid eyes met those of the younger sister of this reserved daughter of the Lord-General.

Both ladies were brilliantly adorned, though not so very gorgeously as the wife of Ireton; hence Betha could discern, less dazzled, the amiable countenance that now smiled on her. She had not, indeed, glanced a second time at the chilling self-centered beauty whom

she had just quitted; but in Frances, the youngest, she saw a charm that rendered mere beauty a dead letter,—frankness, kindliness, and vivacity playing in her eyes and smile. And as Betha drew back from one sister, the movement bringing her closer to the other, in the same instant she found her hand taken by that other, and pressed cordially.

Frances immediately introduced a distinguished-looking young man near her, as her "friend, the once honourable but always right-worthy Robert Rich, who had entered that room with only half a heart, and now had lost it wholly."

On this, a voice from behind, from a handsome but bold-visaged man in a military garb, and who had led in the smiling Frances, demanded, in no very polished language, "to be put up, too, to the little hidden treasure of honest Geoffrey." Frances dared him to show his roll of corresponding merits; but yet laughingly presented him as "the no less hero General Harrison, chief henchman to her valiant father, and who had

just brought the goodly castle of Edinburgh to lay at her feet!"

While she spoke, Betha's eyes were again beat to the ground. But it was now almost as much by the lawless fixture of this fierce republican's, as the recollection that his hand too had written its dark characters in the sanguinary list: she the more shuddered at remembering it was also blotted red from the victim's heart. Oh, how did this gaiety, this jesting of woman's loveliness with blood-stained men, sound in her ears! It seemed to rob that beauty of all its graces, to disrobe her of her innocence, to taint the air she breathed, and cast a lurid shadow over all the splendours where she stood!

Betha gazed for a moment round her, as if for an avenue of escape. She could nowhere see her monitress; and she really felt an awful bewilderment of thought at the strangeness of the whole scene, as well as abhorrence of the persons she met there. What a mockery seemed the whole! Was this a republic?

Wherefore, then, those chairs of state? Wherefore, the self-gratulatory speeches of those who sat on them? Why were all these splendours directed to one set of persons? Was it not a commonwealth? And why were these splendours at all? She shivered to the very heart; for she saw in her mind's eye, as if in immediate answer, the parting pang between Charles and his children. She saw him on his scaffold, — his headless, bleeding trunk; his gory silent grave! She started and uttered a gasp, that was almost a cry, while she suddenly shut her eyes, as if to exclude some object that was painful to her.

General Harrison at that moment was pressing on her, whispering some coarse personal compliments which she did not note, because her possessed mind did not hear them; but Frances supposing the little shudder and half-breathed shriek must have been occasioned by some accidental trampling on her foot, by the huge iron-cased boot of her awkward admirer, gave the General's mailed side a push

with her own delicate hand, it being shielded by a spotless white glove wrought with silver, and bade him recollect, "when he was not riding down enemies in a ploughed field, but paying due reverence to ladies, he must ever leave open order between him and them!" and with this laughing reprimand, she drew Betha towards her, and making a sign to Robert Rich to relieve them of their troublesome companion, proceeded with her kindly self-imposed charge up the room.

Most others of the individuals who had entered in the train of the sisters were dispersed amongst the freshly-appearing groups, while those whose local interests were likely to seek the patronage of Ireton in Ireland were still hovering round the chair of his wife, where she was dispensing smiles and gracious words with all the conscious power of a virtually vice-sovereign: her host, meanwhile, not less self-assured by his own consequence in the seat of his then displayed grandeur, and judging her sufficiently propitiated by the homage he had provided her, repassed

her with an also smiling bow as he moved on, courteously beguiling her sister Mariam, then leaning on his arm, towards the part of the canopy where the picture hung, intending that the circumstances of its story should be the wooer for him.

Mariam did look complacently on that canopy and its dependencies; and having attracted her attention to the picture, he began mingling references of compliment to herself so delicately with the objects he described on the canvass — the fair court of Anne Bollun, — that she not being able to misunderstand their meaning, yet not finding them explicit enough to sanction a check on her part, continued to listen and question, just as the mood directed: and while he talked of the painting, her own eye by a side glance took shrewder observation of the person of her admirer. The proofs of his wealth and influence were every where around her; she saw that, though a father and a widower, he was yet in the prime of his days; that his figure was noble, and his countenance worthy to belong to the

first statesman of any country: for, had her life depended on it, she could not have deciphered there, whether should she bestow her fair self on him, he would continue her devoted slave, or compel her to become his. But when he turned his eyes on hers, they always declared what his words had not ventured fully to imply, that he was ready to fall down and worship her.

"It may be!" said she inwardly, and she put up her lip; but she smiled also inwardly. For O how honey-sweet to some ears — and male as well as female — is the voice of softly-distilled adulation! and when the wisest wist not of it, the deleterious current runneth straight to the heart.

Frances, in advancing up the room with the silent Betha on her arm, descrying where Mariam stood with their host, and perceiving that something particularly worthy curiosity must be engaging their notice, their backs being to the company, she hastened towards them; and just as she drew near, Betha heard her father say to his companion, "I keep these

memorials of former times to display more significantly the advantages we have gained: seeing here, that what our forefathers were forced to do for a despot's pleasure, we now perform fourfold for our own; voluntarily to show honour to the chief of our own choice, whose hardy virtue wrought us the restitution of our birthright; to act by our own wills; and thus to devote ourselves, our lives, our every thing to his offspring!"

The passionate impulse in the conclusion of this sentence could not be mistaken; but the devotion was still declared too generally to satisfy the vain idol he was then at adoration before: she, therefore, with a querulous kind of inattention, and almost as if careless of answer, abruptly interrupted him by asking which of the figures was Anne Bollun? "For she really did not see any so particularly handsome there, as to lead her to find it out herself!"

Geoffrey pointed to a clearly pre-eminently lovely form; but he was too well aware of what he was about, to dispute

the taste or the truth of his fair mistress. "That," said he, "in the pearl-set coif, standing between King Henry and Thomas Baldry, the then owner of this house, witnessing the setting of the city watch, from the very balcony where in a few minutes, if not a regal heart, one which has had the last of that proud tyrant's race at his feet, will beat by your side there, sweetest Mariam! your beauty's slave!"

Mariam still disdainfully threw up her head at the inference she must draw from this; but the bloom was brighter on her cheek; a fluttering smile certainly contradicted the affected frown on her brow.

Betha knew nothing of love nor of lovers, either from the pulses of her own gentle bosom or having heard their language by others; but the tact of nature told her that her father was now addressing Mariam Cromwell in a manner she could hardly have thought that he, a father, would have addressed any woman. Frances, who also observed what was just passing, turned to her young companion

to see its effect on her; and remarking the painful astonishment in her face, she playfully attempted to give the scene a lighter explanation, by whispering, "Your father is *un preux chevalier* in a true roundhead! and would show us maids of a commonwealth some of the graces of the old court gallantries in himself, as well as in that pretty limning."

Betha did not answer, for she knew not what to say; she only felt she was now seeing and hearing the world, and that she was a stranger to its ways; but yet there was gladness in the thought that her father's language to the daughter of Cromwell might be only *court-gallantry*. Frances, however, had spoken too audibly not to be heard by Mariam, who instantly turned sharply round, with then a frown in reality, at being disturbed in the sweet incense she was so proudly inhaling from the superb master of the magnificent entertainment, at which she was aware the whole city was then at admiring gaze.

Just at that moment, a man in the

splendid livery of the house moved respectfully but hastily towards Geoffrey, and, bowing, whispered him. Geoffrey changed colour; but without other sign of emotion, quietly answered, "Tell him to ride quickly back, and say to his master, that to-morrow I shall be happy to see him; but he must excuse me to-night, being so engaged I cannot possibly attend to any other business whatever."

The servant withdrew, and Frances, with a little mischievous aim, as well as to allay the late natural alarm in the daughter of their host, determinately occupying the attention of her sister, Geoffrey, with all his former easy complacency, turned to receive the different groups which were thronging that way to greet the giver of the show. Many of them were members of the house of commons, the then all-sufficient masters of the state, with their ladies; others were citizens who had not parts to play in the pageant itself, with their wives and daughters, vying in every costly garniture of decoration with the most sumptuously-arrayed ladies of the

senators: and whether those senators had been of the ancient gentry of the land, or of its proudest nobility, which, like the stars the bard of England had foretold, "shot madly from their spheres," and falling on the ground proclaimed themselves a bubble — all their wives and sisters, and daughters, pressed to pay their respects to the family of the Lord-General.

The rapidity as well as the brilliancy of the passing crowd made Betha's head giddy; but she observed others besides this gorgeous train; persons in truly republican garbs, neither ruffled nor collared with lace, nor any glittering appendage; with hair cut close to their heads, and aspects sternly regarding all the gayer scene around; and they did not approach the gaudy spot of bending courtesies. There were others also in simple garments too, but with sufficient elegance to show their tastes were genuinely as plain as their principles were honest: these men, some wore their hair rather in the fashion of the past *regime*, a little waving on their brow and shoulders; but all were dressed

with a manly propriety due to the simplicity of a commonwealth, and respectful to the particular occasion announced by its order. These persons seemed rather to tolerate than admire or condemn the extravagant appearances of the other varied groups; and with the sober civility of each in his particular calling, whatever it might be in life, paid his compliments to the host of the hour. The ladies of these graver personages partook of their style of dress and judicious manners also.

Amongst these latter, Betha would have been comforted to have seen her monitress rejoining her, but still she could nowhere descry where she was; and not venturing to interrupt her father during these gratulatory meetings to enquire, she was watching an opportunity to do so, when in the midst of his continued salutations from this anomalous assembly, the clock of Saint Paul's struck nine, an hour beyond the old time of curfew. The same number of trumpets immediately blew as many distinct blasts from the centre court of the mansion.

The suddenness and the loudness of the clarion silenced every speaker in the room; and each stood arrested in the action it caught them in, waiting, in a kind of mute surprise, till the sounds were over, to resume their respective garrulous recognitions. But the moment the vibrations ceased, and the awakened ear yet hung in natural pause, after so rousing a summons to attention, a strain of entrancing music rose as from a distance, mingling voices with the soft modulation of flutes in such sweet unison, it appeared to the now delighted Betha as if Heaven were opening, and the vesper hymn of its celestial choir heard. The sounds drewnearer. The listening stillness in the room had become more unbreathingly mute; and the words of the singers gradually growing distinguishable from the thrilling notes of the melody, she found it was indeed a hymn, a triumphal one too, but more of earth than heaven—comparing the victor for their republic, with the champions of all others, whom, it said, he transcended as much in glory

as the sun did the stars, and against whose secret enemies his patriotic brethren were now going to plant the ancient watchmen of their city.

But so sorry a substitute was this mortal piece of eulogy, for the sacred anthem which in former times, with all the hallowed imagery of poetry, was addressed to the divine Guardian alone of the sleeping world — He who had placed an eye and a shield in each of those bright orbs, under the direction of Himself; *who if He does not keep the city, the watchman waketh in vain!*—that many who were present regretted this change, whatever had been the alterations of their opinions with regard to the sublunary rulers of their city. And when the strain closed, which, though the words of the invocation were new, had yet remained as of old, several of the company of juster taste, were pressing forward to their host to declare their dissent from the innovation, he having ordered the whole, when in the moment he had taken the hand of the Lady of Ireton to lead her

to her station on the opened balcony, to view the commencing procession of the watch (the hymn having been the herald), Betha found herself suddenly pushed aside from her position near her father and the three chief ladies of the *fête*, by the hurried approach of some person, and instantly she saw a man in military uniform, covered with dust, his dress in disorder, and without even doffing his iron-scalped hat in that grand assembly, thrust Frances Cromwell as rudely out of his way as herself, and abruptly saying to Her Excellency, who then stood nighest to him: "By your leave, Mistress Ireton!" pushed past her too; and without further ceremony, taking the master of the house by the arm, said, loud enough for most of the immediate circle to hear, "Geoffrey, my business is as peremptory as any man's; and I must have it settled to-night!"

Geoffrey, even then, bridled the roused passions which threw the whole blood of his body, it might have been supposed, into his face and the flash of his eye.

Betha saw it instantly answered by one of equal menace on the part of the intruder; who, by his rude soldier's garb, and darkened countenance over-grown with hair, showing nothing of it visible but the blaze of his angry glance, seemed to her some ruffian from the dregs of the commonwealth, such as she had heard Mildred speak of as a disgrace to the cause.

Betha caught the arm of Frances, and trembling said something she knew not what.

"Why, surely," returned the daughter of Cromwell, laughing, "you are not frightened at the grim visage of your mad-cap uncle!"

"My uncle?" reiterated Betha, hardly crediting that the coarsely-harnessed soldier before her, as rough too in manners as in guise, could be the gallant to man and woman; the handsome, and the gaily though carelessly-dressed, merry-making person, she had recently heard described by Gervase; indeed, whom she remembered to have seen under that very roof,

when her mother was yet alive, who in her sight made him a present of a full purse of gold, of her own embroidery. It was on his birth-day; and he laughingly told her, "He hoped she would live his term out at least, to so honour them all."

"Yes, your uncle!" retorted Frances, "and pleasant enough yet, when he chooses to put off the camp agitator, and become as he was wont, the very most agreeable of all dangerous spendthrifts and spend-selfs!" There Frances sighed; and then laughing added, "But when folks take to the down-hill of their good name, nought stops them; and the simpleton hopes against fate, who expects such will ever be what *they were wont* again. And yet, Betha, your uncle is no profligate either. — But, hush! somebody will hear us."

Geoffrey, during this little dialogue between his daughter and his fair guest, had so mastered the resentment that shot through his whole frame at being thus insolently bearded, and at such a moment, that he answered some yet more

violent additions of Leonard with a calming smile.

"Enough, my brother," said he. "When the pageant has passed, and my duties of hospitality to this good company are over, I shall attend to your business entirely, before I sleep."

"Very well!" was the short reply of Leonard; who then turning briskly round, his eye caught the smiling glance of Frances Cromwell.

"Hah, my pretty Fanny!" cried he. "Now for the old salute to any thing so fine!" And taking off his heavy morion, with indeed the cavalier grace which showed where his companionship had at times been, he shook his matted locks, no longer bright and perfumed, and pulling her arm through his, exclaimed, "You shall stand by me on the platform: a fitter mate for brave Oliver's daughter, than any of those mincing Brutii, with more gold on their backs than mettle in their hearts or broadsword!"

"As you list in this," replied Frances: "but you must take your niece on the other arm."

A few words explained who the tremulous young creature by her side was, whose simple raiment seemed to him so little in place, she might have been mistaken for some disturbed sleeper walking in amongst them. And so he told her, when, shaking her carelessly by the hand, he placed it on the scaled leather of his vantbras, and strode off with his charges towards the front of the balcony.

Until the time for the spectacle, the windowed doors which led into it had been concealed from the company in the room by brocade curtains; but on the ceasing of the choral hymn they were drawn slowly aside, and then the full light of the illuminated street was unfolded. The old, projecting, lantern-like balcony, which had sustained the royal group of Henry Tudor and his beautiful queen, had been taken down by order of Geoffrey, and replaced by a superb outward gallery, supported by palm-like

pillars, gilded and draperied, in the manner of an eastern pavilion.

On going forward to its golden balustrade, Betha then certainly became all eye. Her most vivid imagination could hardly have fancied such a scene; and, as assuredly, she had not expected any thing like it. The night was particularly fine; the deep blue vault being studded with the mildly-beaming summer stars, shedding their silvery lustre on the spot now eclipsing their brightness. The houses, from one end of West Cheap to the other, were hung with painted lanterns, and garnished with flambeaux on their roofs, making a crest of fire. From every window the richly-emblazoned banners of different trades, and curtains of brilliantly-wrought stuffs hung out, sweeping, stage after stage, downwards, till their magnificent borders touched the very pavement. Out of these windows, or leaning from balconies before them, appeared numerous spectators of both sexes, mostly clad in their gayest apparel, and glittering in every gem of which they

were the owners. The street itself was railed off on each side, ostensibly for the convenience of the spectators of the lower orders, but, in fact, to prevent their pressing in and disturbing the regularity of the procession.

To those who looked from President Baldry's house the procession seemed commencing from the great conduit at the west end of the Cheap: and that grandest fountain of the city was in full play, throwing up its waters like rainbows to an immense height; and, when they fell, lights were so constructed in the basin as to make it seem raining into a sea of molten fire.

From each side of that point the march of the city watch began. The different orders that composed the parade moving in precise time with the martial sounds of the trumpets and other wind-instruments which preceded them; the whole being led by a band so appointed, and habited in superb heraldic coats of the old civic minstrelsy, wrought with the arms of the several wards of the city;

they were also mounted on horses caparisoned in the same style: for whatever bore evidence of any peculiar high consideration of the City of London in former days was carefully preserved.

Then came the sword-bearer of the first magistrate of the city, the Lord Mayor. This chivalric attendant and his steed were both in complete panoply of war; only the sword he bore was in a sheath of too gay embroidery to allow any dread of its being used for sterner purpose than a grand parade:—the sign, not the substance, of the fierce, unscabbarded glave then making full harvest of brother against brother on the midland strath between the sister countries.

The Lord Mayor himself, arrayed in his crimson velvet mantle, and collar of office, of the finest chased gold and precious stones, which his predecessors had received from kings, and before many of whom they had nobly worn it, appeared next, a sort of conscience to himself, on a stately horse, with the richest housings, attended by pages, running-foot-

men, and other lacqueys of the great, all habited in liveries of appropriate fashion.

Then succeeded the two sheriffs in scarlet robes and gold chains, followed by their civil and also awful officers. The latter were clad in black close jerkins of common serge, with each his instrument of execution in his hand; and on his head so largely visored a cap, his face could not be distinguished. Next marched the aldermen of London and the common-councilmen, every man in the embroidered cloths or brocaded damasks long custom had assigned for the fabrick of their costly suits of ceremony; it being presumed that such came either from the foreign countries with which they trafficked, or were the produce of profitable looms they had established in their own. Pages and servants, in sumptuous liveries, also flanked this goodly company; but porters of the wain, packers, and unpackers, and other attendants of the warehouse, each party with their pulleys, bale-cloths, and cordage, brought up its rear.

And then the whole of this body of the procession, considering itself especially of the brotherhood of the splendid director of the night, when it came opposite to the house of Baldry, stopped for the space of half a minute, and the trumpets of its heralds blew a salute to the worshipful President of the Great Company of Merchant Adventurers, and again to the daughters of the Great Lord General. Geoffrey's trumpets, from a stand on the roof of his house, immediately returned the double salutation, and a loud and simultaneous hurrah from the populace beneath bursting forth, while waving their caps to the bowing heads on the Baldry platform, shook the before calm air with such vibratory motion, that the banners over them floated in the earth-born breeze.

"Ay, there ye go!" audibly muttered Leonard. "Shout, ye heady fools! There isn't a man of you that wouldn't cry havoc to us all, if the wind set in that quarter!"

"Hush, thou incorrigible agitator!"

cried Frances, in a tone of gay reprimand. "What canst thou possibly mean?"

The ejaculation of her uncle, and its rejoinder, abruptly recalled Betha from the pleasure her youthful imagination was enjoying from the sort of storied display, memorialising, to her quick sensibility, her honoured country's power and grandeur amongst the nations. She had not understood the dark men with the sheriffs; and therefore, without the spell-breaking recognition of their office, she had looked on behind the homage-paying bevy that had halted, and discerned the lengthened ranks of other gorgeous companies stretching far beyond her sight. The whole, from end to end, in like manner with the street, was illumined by hundreds of transparent Chinese lanterns, carried amidst the waving streamers of as many glittering flags.

Betha was inwardly comparing this advancing train to what she had read in the fairy tales of her nursery, when she heard the appalling observation, and light but questioning rebuke, of her two

companions. He had paused a moment before he replied, and then said in a lowered voice, "What can I mean, my little wizard? Rather tell me what business hath a pretty girl to list to the soliloquies of a bearded lip on any subject but her own beauty? Thou hast nothing to do in this life, sweet one, but to smile and be kind, and leave the rest to fortune."

"Pshaw!" was the retort of Frances, but it was not a peevish one, at being so silenced; and saying something quite foreign from the matter, she and Leonard continued to smile and talk together in the same under-key.

His niece, however, in the solitude of her thoughts, had followed the interdicted subject; and there she conceived his whole meaning,—that the very mob, which on proclamation of the execution of him they called tyrant, had rent the air in triumph of having got rid of the tax-paid pomps of royal majesty, this very mob now lauding to the skies the glories of his most inexorable judge, and

the spoil-clad presence of those who had assisted in dragging the throne into the dust — this very mob might, by some momentary impulse, see that they had destroyed one proud sovereign! — but here were many! — and the instant spirit of counteraction breaking forth, the cry be indeed havoc on them! The most delightful charm of the scene was therefore dissolved to the mind of the young spectatress; but still the novelty and the splendour fascinated her gaze, and she admired, though no longer wrapped in the glowing enchantment of her own raised fancy, accompanying the real objects of so noble a spectacle.

The body politic of even then the most powerful city in the world, thus doffing their true dignity before the footstool of a phantom free government, which their wise and venerable fathers never dreamt of, having accomplished the intended obeisance, passed on with a flourish of the same trumpets which had preceded them. Then came a grand band of every species of military instru-

ment, playing the well-known British march of victory. They were immediately followed by the regimental ensigns of the city's famous battalia, the London militia, bearing the proud mottoes of their conquests at Marston-moor, Naseby, Newbury, Dunbar, and Edinburgh; and the battalion itself, represented by chosen companies, appeared in triumphal array behind their colours. A troop of lancers, excellently armed and mounted, led the van; their glittering points and streaming pennons tracking their quick passing with a scintillating light. Then bodies of as gallantly-arrayed halberdiers, pikemen, and billmen, and musqueteers, and a train of artillery, completed the display of "Who that did it!" Not a few there, looking smiling up to old comrades on the Baldry platform, nodding their heads in jocose recollections of their own apprentice-days, or rather nights, when the remnants of this very watch they were now assisting to establish in all its pristine vigour, used to be haled, trem-

bling out, to check their riotous meetings.

Following that military triumph, next appeared one of the ancient pageant stages, drawn by eight coal-black horses, in silver housings, hung with bells; and on the stage itself, raised and decorated in the form of a pyramid, and surmounted by a golden effigy of the moon and seven stars, sat the full minstrelsy of the city companies, all in their appropriate coats and colours, and playing solemn music.

In the rear of this immense machine, showing human faces up to the very top, the great object of the whole spectacle, THE CITY WATCH, appeared. A body of twelve hundred men, chosen by fifties out of each ward, and all clad in a sort of demi-military harness, while the weapons they carried, whether sword or bill or harquebuss, were of the best proof; and the arms which grasped them appeared not less so, either for watch or ward, or skill and stoutness to maintain that ward, should London's self become the field of contest. A division of archers,

clothed in Saxon green, the immemorial glory of the British host, and even at that time the surest sharp-shooters of its armament, with bows bent, and shafts of arrows at their sides, brought up the full complement of the city's sentinels.

The rear was closed by another ancient pageant stage; where the minstrels, all young and handsome, and clothed in white robes, in imitation of a heavenly choir, sang a hymn of *rest to the sleepers*, "Since the watch was set, and the fear of the slumberer need be no more."

CHAP. XIII.

And there certainly was a solemn pause in every heart when the strain died away. Attention seemed to have found its point of repose, from the extreme excitement of the recent hour. And, in the fulness of gratified pleasure, every mind on the Baldry-platform was preparing to utter its glow of admiration to the successful manager of the whole, when the burst broke from the street.

A sudden mist had seemed for a few moments to occupy the ground which the pageant-car had vacated; and, on its as sudden dispersion, shouts pealed from the populace below, and Baldry's name was oftener heard in the acclamation than either Cromwell's or the commonwealth. Every eye of those then thronging round Geoffrey, to express their own gratulations, turned instinctively to the new

rapture, and they beheld, as if it had risen from out the earth, a fountain of the most dazzling sparry splendour, and of such vastness and curiosity of form, it appeared the store-head of a hundred streams: and so it was. The majestic figure of Thames, like a mighty giant, lay on his glittering grotted bed at the summit, and from before him and around opened those fountain mouths, flowing with wines of every hue and quality which the vineyards of the world, within the sail of a British compass, could produce.

It is needless to add there was no scant of haste in the eager multitude stretching the ready pitchers towards the bounteous entertainment.

"Well done, brother!" cried Leonard, nodding his head to him across the line of guests between them. Geoffry understood the look that accompanied this sarcastic plaudit; but he was then too elated to heed its presuming menace. Leonard also was elated with the argument he thought in his own hands, and in the flush of his spirits, whispered his

fair companion: "Brother Geoffrey bleeds freely to-night! — better stuff, my pretty Fanny, than thou couldst broach from the thriftless sides of such reckless fellows as I am, whose good steel won the commonwealth, these pack so snugly in their own girdles, and wear trophied in their bowing caps! but I will have every feather; — by this arm I swear it! and then, my Fanny! ——"

And Leonard, clasping the iron pommel of his sword rather too soldierly against a lady's side, with a flashing fire in his eyes, and a smile on his handsome mouth, which even his bristling beard could not quite deform, bent his face to her, and in a lowered voice seemed inclined to have finished the sentence; but laughingly she drew back her head, commending the wise heads he arraigned, for taking care of what they had got, from such as he; well knowing that such a forlorn hope were as nimble at losing their own estate as winning a neighbour's.

"There," cried she, to Betha, pointing to a group of armed men diversely ac-

coutred, in a distant recessed window of the room, and talking together with much apparent vehemence, "those are some of his coadjutors, ready to scale door or window at the first whistle of his outlaw pipe."

Betha involuntarily turned her eye as directed, and the merry-mooded Frances continued: "Do you see yon red-visaged Magog, just as if he had started out of Guildhall? in a buff jerkin, rather the worse for wear; and the rest of his harness the freshest plunder from the last cavalier camp. Help me to his name, Leon? it has slipped my head."

"Most women have it in their hearts!" returned he. "Pride! my fair mistress! no less a man, that is, than our trained-band's doughty major; and none worse that was, than my lordly father's refractory drayman: yet he's a true fellow, in spite of that hacked doublet, by way of *ecce signum*; and well worthy striking palms with brave Jack Harrison yonder, who had wit enough to exchange his steel-yard for a shearing-hook, that has brought

more gold under the signet of his little finger, than my graceless varletism could bring to hand by auction of soul and body!"

Though Leonard spoke to Frances, his eye happened to catch a glimpse of his niece's face, who was turning away with a countenance of something more than mere distaste, of two such rudely-accoutred and harsh-visaged men.

"What?" asked her uncle, "Is my little Betha scared at these iron-hewed patriots? I will shew thee one nearer the dream of a gentle maid!" And he bade her observe a hero in the same group, of younger years than the preceding, and cased, with scrupulous attention to nicety, in a scarlet velvet brigandine, overlaid with braids of gold, tagged and buckled. His bushy flowing hair mingled low on his shoulders with the red sweeping plumage of his bacinet; but his chin was shaven, and shewed the whole of a face, its owner thereby proclaimed to be, in his opinion, at all points resistless.

"He is of lady-breeding, moreover,

tender-eyed, as thou seest! Sweet Master Joyce! — Fanny," continued he, with affected seriousness, "shall we introduce him to my niece?"

"No! no!" hastily interrupted Betha. "He looks more fiercely cruel than even the other two! And I beseech you, my uncle, spare me from being introduced to any of them!"

The thoughtless Frances whispered "Bravo!" to Leonard; and then declaring her young friend too admirable a discerner of characters to be vexed any longer by such a threat, told her plainly, that Colonel Joyce — for, alas! he was a Colonel! — was no acquaintance of hers: she despised him too entirely, as a sort of non-descript coxcomb round-head; and, perhaps, a little to boot, on account of his original callings — tailor and parasite to the honourable company of London-apprentices! — "Till your witless uncle here," added she, "in sheer gratefulness, or to pay off an old score, raised him from the needle to the sword, and

so the tailor's craft has unsuited his patron for his pains!"

Betha had heard too much of these three several persons, in her frequent discourses with poor old Gervase, to allow her to do other than abhor their ways of executing the commissions imposed on them, even if she must believe the purport of those commissions just; and therefore, almost aghast at finding herself in the presence of so many she hoped never to look upon, she could not answer the lively badinage of Cromwell's daughter, concerning men so disgraceful to the cause of which he was now the head; but, clasping her uncle's arm, seemed to retreat into herself in distressed silence.

At that moment two other military personages, of simple and respectable deportment, passed. "A marvel!" exclaimed Leonard. "There goes Squire Ingoldsby and his puritanical ally, the Colonel of Owthorne Hall! What can have brought them here? They cast no

very cordial glance on thy prodigal lover, Fanny; and yet they go simpering forward to greet yon measureless largess-giver, my brother. Hypocrites! had they the commonwealth coffers under their lock and key, I would not truck a Scotch *baubee* for any share they would dispense to us brave merry-making fellows, who bought them so dear to spend, not hoard!"

"For the very reason that you are brave, merry-making fellows!" retorted she; "they, and all who hold the coffers, doubtless think that heroes of your complexion, can furnish yourselves as pleasantly from yon wasting fountain in the street, as the uproarious crew now making the sky echo to their jollity."

"Hah!" cried he. "Is this thy creed? Then such faith shall not be scandalised; for before sun-rise I pledge thee, by thine own dear self, I will have my clutch on the fountain-head of yon wasting conduit, or may a pair of rosy lips never smile on me, Fanny!"

He laughed, and clasped the delicate

hand he held to his rough-clad bosom: she laughed too, and called him a wild-brained brigand, that nobody cared enough about, either to smile or frown at. What he whispered in reply, Betha did not hear, nor had she attended to all that had been said just now, it being uttered in rather suppressed voices; but she observed the daughter of Cromwell blush to the forehead, and then suddenly starting, looked round alarmed, and instantly in great confusion broke away from him and put her arm through that of a young man, who had approached and touched her shoulder. Betha recollected him to be the same Frances had introduced to her, at the beginning of the evening, by the name of Rich, the nephew and heir of the republican partisan, Earl Holland.

His fair friend immediately commenced a gay remark to him, on some of the groups in the room, and turned him hastily away from her recent companions. Betha was not surprised that her late young protectress had made her escape,

even with so little ceremony to herself, from the very free manners of Leonard Baldry. She had rather wondered at her suffering them so long, and with such small show of displeasure at their familiarity; and though Betha felt she was making these mental observations on her father's brother, the instinct of feminine delicacy led her even farther; and a repugnance to being left the sole companion of one accustomed to such unlicensed modes of discourse, made her instantly attempt drawing away her arm to rejoin her new friend; but Leonard held it fast.

"Not so, my meek one!" cried he. "Your uncle Leonard has a word or two for your private ear. You seem a discreet maiden; — not like yon damsel, who would allow every round-head puppy of us all, to palm her dainty hand, and sigh his soul into her ear, while she would send an eye behind her for any strayed cavalier coxcomb, lucky enough to have had his head left on his shoulders! How would you like her for an aunt, Betha? By courtesy, I mean, of her sister, my

Lady Mariam, being made your step-dame! For, I promise you, I would rather wed old Mildred, in her buckram suit, than this pretty jilt with a smile for any man!"

He paused in his half-jesting, half-angry questions, and looked in his niece's embarrassed face for an answer. But she could form no reply, from the shock of feeling, that the idea he had thus gaily hinted respecting the elder of the two ladies, was a kind of seconding of the misgiving in her own thoughts, that her father did indeed intend the most striking honours of this pageant as a particular compliment to the daughter of Cromwell, and with a view to her final acceptance of himself.

"Come!" rejoined her uncle. "Honour your breeding, and speak out? For if you resemble your mother, who might have been the Gracchi's own dam, and yet was modest as yourself, you will spurn being domineered over by that piece of cold-blooded calculation, Maid Mariam — or carried about as cover-

shame by that cunning lady of hearts, her zoneless sister! Betha, I know them both; so, beware of them!"

She had then turned her eyes on him, and his countenance was grave, to severity. — He caught the answering expression of hers; and, with an instantaneous smile, recovered the gaiety of his former mood.

"I warn, as the bells ring, merrily!" cried he: "so no dismal looks, child. — You have nothing to do when the step-dame takes her throne, but buckle closer to honest Mildred; and playing the commonwealth principles in a separate house, who then so free as my pretty niece?" —

"I do not understand you, uncle?" —

"That is a pity!" replied he, laughing. "But when the dilemma comes, send for me; and I will enlighten both thyself and thy monitress! — Meanwhile, a truce to gravity; — and do turn thine eyes to Her Excellency yonder! — I will tell thee how she came by her jay's feathers! — Do you see that grey-cloaked

old limb of decrepitude, tottering out of the door, yonder, with the gold compass at his button-hole?" —

"Yes," answered she, obeying the direction of his observations; but still uneasy at the strange and rapidly-changed discourse of her uncle.

"That," said he, "in this wonderful masquerade of hypocrisy, is Probity Marten, the worshipful warden of masonry, and moreover lord of council; who, the very night monarchy died, stole off into the West Minster with pick-axe in hand, — not to dig a grave there, — but to unearth the old sanctuary of crowning apparatus, from Saint Ned to Saint Carl; — and he got them all! —— Then came the shuffle of clubs for diamonds! — Bradshawe carried off the sage Confessor's sceptre-knob, to buckle his cloak; — Cromwell the globe, for a snuff-box; — but Madam Ireton —— hers was a capital stroke! and you see the whole suit of brave Queen Bess's jewellery decorating the homely little person of that most egregious great lady!"

And with these words Leonard burst into so turbulent a peal of laughter, mocking the airs too with which he declared she meant to queen it, that he attracted the attention not only of the nearest bystanders, but of some at a distance; all wondering what the wild brother of their worthy host could be making himself so outrageously merry about, with no other sharer in his discourse than the simple, demure-looking young thing, his niece, leaning on his arm silent and downcast.

Amongst those who distinguished the jovial sounds from the other side of the room was General Harrison, who, as soon as he recognised the voice to be his old boon companion's, hastened to join him, and partake his mirth: they shook each other's rough trenchant-scarred hands heartily; and when Leonard's bold comrade of former lawless exploits, perceived that the beautiful and timid girl whom Frances Cromwell had carried off from his first introduction, was not only his boisterous friend's niece,

but actually then by his side, he took his station, on the ancient principles of their fraternity; and the free-booting champion of his own will in those days of their mutual apprenticeship, now he was master of his art, certainly showed no inclination to vacate his present instantly-seized quarters close to his friend, and with a gaze never withdrawn from the bent-down, glowing face of his niece. While Leonard repeated to him the subject of his merriment, a few whispering observations passed between them, which threw both into such roars of laughter, that Betha began to feel herself not only oppressively situated in being again near that horrible General Harrison, but disreputably too; though one of the persons conducting himself so disturbingly, of the universal propriety of her father's guests, was his own brother: therefore, after enduring it as long as her perturbed nerves would allow, while the occasional touch of her hand, even though protected in its glove, from his audacious companion in the affected energy of enforcing his conversation,

so increased her agitation, she at last tried to remove her arm, though gently, from her uncle's, saying, falteringly, that "she thought she ought to seek Dame Mildred, for all the party seemed going."

"Only to the feast below," returned he; "but you seek nobody, Betha, while I am here to protect you. Don't be afraid of merry fellows, child! Cajoling your sex, and treating them ill, comes with smooth-faced oily tongues, that would cheat the devil, and then put up for saintship! I must have you one of us, my girl, and no disparagement to your modesty either."

This speech rather augmented than allayed Betha's anxiety for release; and with confused but earnest solicitations to be allowed to withdraw from raillery she could not understand, she tried, even strugglingly, to extricate her arm.

"By Heaven, sweet Betha," cried Harrison, seizing the familiar name with which Leonard had addressed her, "we are making no raillery! And if you are the girl to spare long courting, and will take

a man at his word, here is your uncle to witness my troth! And I swear, that as John Harrison's better-half, not a Cromwell of them all, from Mistress Ireton to your intended step-dame, shall hold a higher head than the wife of my bosom!"

The hasty and unmannered wooer, at that moment, forgetting he was in a crowd, or rather taking advantage of the pressing throng, then all in motion towards the supper-room, threw his arm round her shrinking waist, and in the same instant clasped her to his mailed, and, it may well be said, iron heart! For Betha again saw the black-blotted list in her possession, and remembered the dissimulating absence of this man, when the very deed, which had covered that scroll with its blood, was a doing! She shuddered, as if that blood had touched her, on his breast; and springing from him, with a gasping shriek, which told the action was that of detestation, she would have made her escape from her uncle also; but Leonard, not liking the effect of such a flight on his brother, should his

daughter join him in this panic, instantly stretching out his powerful arm, clutched her again, and brought her once more, now almost motionless with terror, in a firmer grasp, to his side.

"Shame!" cried he, to Harrison. "This camp-gallantry won't suit here!" Then turning to her, whose fainting agitations, when she found herself so entirely a prisoner, had given way to a flood of tears — "It is well," said he, "that yon musical uproar from the banquet-hall, and every body's self-occupation in making their way thither, prevented that childish scream being heard. You might, else, have seen swords drawn, and all because of a little fool not knowing her best friends!"

Betha made no other answer than half-stifled sobs, and vain beseechings, in almost inarticulate words, to be allowed to go.

"What has befallen this young lady, Colonel Baldry?" enquired a kindly gentleman's voice of Leonard. Betha, encouraged by this interference, looked

up, and discovered to the benevolent questioner her tear-bedewed face, and waving ringlets all in disorder over it; while she saw in him another military officer, but of a different aspect, and fashioned regimentals, from the restrainless behaviour and bandit-harness of the men with whom he found her. The gentleman, however, had only discerned that Leonard was with her, and, with a smile to qualify to her detainer the pitying glance with which he regarded her, he gently added — " Poor young thing! she does not appear quite a willing prize, Leonard! "

" No prize of mine, General," replied her uncle, shrugging his shoulders, " only my niece! And, child as the little damsel seems, all these tears flow at seeing so many pomps and vanities beweeding the good soil the best blood in the land has washed to make it otherwise."

The officer did smile again at this reply, but it was mournfully; and Betha, though anxious still for release, felt more reconciled to her reprobated uncle from

the nature of the remark, which seemed to have indeed penetrated her thoughts during part of the evening, and now approved them. The officer, as has been said, smiled, and looking more intently in her face, repeated, "Your only niece, Colonel Baldry?"

"Yes," returned Leonard, colouring, "Poor Eustace had no daughter; so this is heiress to all our lands and virtues! — One of the scales might carry her up to heaven!"

The General, for such was the officer's rank, gently resumed, but now to Betha herself, respectfully bowing— "Trust me, lady," said he, "there are follies, and crimes too, committed in the name of a people's freedom. But though both disgrace the perpetrators, and therefore injure the cause by connection with such persons, the principle of equal right remains unsullied, the only protection of the weak and humble. But, sweet one!" and he kindly took the trembling hand which hung over the pressing arm of her uncle, adding, "there are many eyes,

gentle as your own, which will long weep these stains on what might have been a bright exemplar, and such tears have pleading in them!"

Betha did not move a finger to withdraw her hand from this amiable speaker; and eager to seize the favourable opportunity, she was just going to entreat her uncle to allow this friend of his to take her to Mildred or her father; when Leonard, guessing her intent, abruptly prevented her, by addressing the general with some news from the North; informing him that he had just rode into London on some private business with Geoffrey, not to see this *fête*, ere he, and the men under his command, commenced their march next day to join the succours for the Lord-General. "I wish," added he, "your Excellency would let me recruit you back again. Oliver would give me a prize for that!"

The other shook his head. — "I have had enough of battles, and their issues too! And, perhaps, this young lady would do well to follow a not very disin-

terested advice, and also have done with the triumphs of this night herself! She looks wearied; and if she would accept of an old soldier's hand —"

"Just what I want her to do, and for life!" growled Harrison, who had stood in a kind of dogged retreat behind a pillar, from the time of the officer's approach. "And I should take care whose advice she followed, and that she needed no man's protection but my own."

Betha, at the sound of that wolf-like voice, shrunk from his advance almost into the very bosom of her uncle. And the General, observing her and him and Leonard with a glance, turned on Harrison a second look of pointed disdain, which that ruffianly pretender to the soldier's brave name did not himself meet; being too intently contemplating the fluctuating cheek of her he had determined should be his prize; but Leonard saw it, and clearly comprehended its import. The veteran did not condescend to answer Harrison, but spoke again to Leonard.

"Colonel Baldry," said he, "I am a married man; therefore may be believed to understand the delicacy due to the honour of a female relative, even beyond the utmost chariness of a batchelor kinsman. Allow me, then, as a gage of friendship between us, to conduct your niece to her father's side."

A moment decided Leonard, who had found his suddenly-smitten partisan going far beyond his check with the proper reserves of his niece. And being aware there were recollections in the mind of his brother Geoffrey, which must always render the presence of her proposed conductor too irksome to him to permit time for remarks on the sort of company, or rather discourse, she was taken from, he put her hand at once into the officer's, cordially thanking him for the thought and the service.

Betha caught the respectable arm which had so timely offered its protection, with an eagerness she could not conceal. And Leonard, whose as critical wink to Harrison prevented an explosion

of prohibitory denunciation from his lips, perceiving the impression with which his niece was leaving him, tapped her then smiling cheek with his finger, and softly said — "Betha, we part not so. Your uncle Leonard may have little of your father's love — and my once-commander there may tell you so; but it were ill for bankrupts to weigh deserts! And as your mother made up his lack while she lived, I must needs, then, love her daughter! So thy hand, Betha."

The name of her beloved mother, so used, was indeed a talisman on the heart of her child. Betha turned to Leonard, and not only offered him her hand, but her lip — her innocent lip! — the seat of truth and filial tenderness. And as she did so, the manner of addressing him, sacred to the memory of the lamented parent who she knew had always been his pleading friend, faltered from her lip — "My dear uncle, Leonard!"

Leonard hastily took the kindred kiss her heart had offered, and, shaking her hand rather too roughly, ere he relin-

quished it; he bade good speed to the General, and turned, with something of a flushed countenance, to his companion.

"Harrison," said he, "we will talk about that pretty niece of mine to-morrow: — now the little jade has half unmanned me! — I will not meet Geoffrey at the supper-table, but shall see him to-night. So, let you and me say farewell till morn: for I have any thing but feasts to meddle with, before the third trumpet of this new watch calls me here again!"

The angry remonstrance which Harrison made to part of this was quelled, for a time at least, by a few more words in explanation. And leaving the house together, one directed his steps towards the Tower, and the other to take boat for Whitehall.

CHAP. XIV.

DURING Betha's silent walk towards the crowded galleries leading to the banquet-hall, her conductor again scrutinised her downcast countenance.

"I am not mistaken!" said he to himself. "It is the same exquisite face I saw that evening in the old grotto. But how different then and now! There, the sweet composure of a holy abstraction from the world elevated every faultless feature with an angelic inspiration; and, as she passed, I could have asked her prayers for my protection! — Here, she is in the world! and it has already disturbed the serenity of that saintly brow with the breath of violence!—ruffled, even as the plumage of the dove, that innocent bosom! — and, as mine own child, I could now shelter thee in mine!"

He did not speak; but his eyes would

have uttered this had she looked up and met their compassionate expression.

He marvelled, indeed, at the alteration in her appearance, with regard to the style of her dress. Instead of the smoothly-braided hair on that spotless forehead, and the maidenly-parting veil which gave her placid face to the moonlight, dishevelled locks were here, and the lovely virgin head had no other covering. The very change to this girlish fashion, from the garb of womanhood in which he beheld her on that remembered evening, had tended, more than her passing from the mourning hue to white, to prevent his recognising her at first, when he saw her leaning, all agitation and tears, on the arm of Leonard Baldry. But this very alteration, (which had seemed so extraordinary to him, when, on hearing she was Geoffrey's daughter, he thought he discerned again the beautiful recluse of Matchelowe Court,) appeared, on thought, to be sufficiently explained by the rumour of the night; every whispering tongue being busy with the

suspected views of their host, in making the great city procession so peculiarly directed to the gratification of the Lord-General's family. And that President Baldry, with an eye so bent, should be desirous to prevent his paternal years being easily numbered by the youthful arbitress of his wishes, and also not to alarm the well-known vanity of that young beauty by the sight of charms in his daughter, to be understood as of an age to dispute the empire of admiration with his bride, seemed quite reason enough with a father, meditating such a marriage, to present her to the world now as little more than a child.

The kind veteran, — for he was a veteran, though a young man, — thinking thus, felt, that should the event take place, her fate would most probably be worse than an orphan. For is not the power of a step-dame's jealousy over the parental heart which has given its widowed vows to such influence, even proverbial? And the new friend of Betha cast in his mind how to venture

any of those hints, which, by forewarning, might avert some of those evils likely to ensue on that assuredly unsuspicious head. For how can truth and inexperience conjecture the destiny that selfishness and cunning may devise? He wished to be cautious in giving her pain; but with regard to her discretion in so honouring the motives of what he might say as to render his confidence safe, he remembered enough of what honest Hugh had evidenced in her praise not to allow a doubt in his mind.

To tell her that he had seen her before, he deemed not necessary to ensure the credit he sought. And the knowledge, on her part, that her retirement could be invaded by a stranger's foot, would deprive her of that secure sense of seclusion in her solitary walks, which, to the contemplative, he knew by experience was the very bed of their repose. He therefore began by gently enquiring whether she often saw her uncle, Colonel Baldry?

She answered in the negative. She had not seen him before this night since

she lost her mother; and, prior to that, very seldom. For — and she added this with a blushing hesitation, — his modes of life were too free for her father to approve; and, though her mother pitied her misled brother-in-law, and with a sister's anxiety sought him, it was rarely she could draw him from those who cruelly courted him, Betha had often heard her say, to pleasure themselves in leading him to ruin.

"Ay! poor Leonard!" rejoined his former General; — for she recollected her uncle had called him so, — "these misleaders hover round him yet. But I think by your reply, lady, you cannot have much acquaintance with that one of them we left just now in his company."

"No, no!" returned she; "and I hope never to see him again!"

"I could not doubt it," returned the officer; "but I see *that* in him which makes me apprehend he does not intend this shall be his last sight of you."

Betha's sudden paleness showed her

abhorrence of this intention; and she hurryingly answered — "It cannot be! My father allows of no visits to me; and my uncle Leonard — Oh, it is impossible he could so insult me!"

Her conductor respectfully pressed the hand he held upon his arm. "I shall be very honest with you. For I knew and revered your mother, sweet Betha! and for her sake I will speak without reserve; and for her sake you must hear me."

"With reverence! with gratitude!" returned Betha, her voice showing that the memory of her mother was then full in her heart.

The officer proceeded — "Your father is still a young and admired man; and, if reports be true, it is not improbable he will soon bring another mistress over his family. That person may choose to lessen her domestic cares by disposing of her husband's daughter in marriage likewise; and, according to the mode of the times, think to please your father, and not displeasure yourself, by selecting for that purpose any one of the deemed most

eminent and wealthiest men of the commonwealth. That man, from whose rude address I felt a parental anxiety to release you, is rich with the spoils of honour and humanity. I must trust the plain truth with you, daughter of the most simple-minded and noblest of women! and not be chary of speaking that man's character to you. He was the trophied messenger from the Lord-General with the last victorious accounts from the North; and, I understand, he was the person Mariam Cromwell distinguished by allowing to be her conductor into this house, so likely soon to be her own. The inference may be evident, that, should such a union take place, and he pretend to this pure and virgin hand, it would scarcely be denied him."

Betha could not answer in any way: a fearful chasm seemed opening before her; her head swam, and she leaned more heavily on the arm that held hers.

"I participate the pain I create," rejoined he; "but I hail this emotion as

the pledge of your future resistance; for, O sweet Betha! let me conjure you, by your peace here, and, perhaps, hereafter, to suffer no intimidation (temptation can hardly be on such a side) ever to overrule you to give your wedded self to this man; or, indeed, to any, whatever his high estimation with the governors of your country, who has proved himself guilty of deliberate cruelty to a fellow-creature committed to his power, or of as pre-determined a treachery to a friend confiding in his humanity and honour! Such a man is General Harrison."

The officer paused a moment, then resumed.—

"We have all thought too well of the goodness of the harvest that may follow the *sowing of wild oats!*—the boast of headstrong youth as the presumptuous pledge of future noble manhood! But experience shows, that the reputed *reformed rake* making the *best of husbands*, and the *dissipated reveller* becoming the most *trust-worthy member of society*, are, when seen, equally miracles!—but

from Heaven, not of nature. For *habit doth breed a nature in a man.* And it is wicked cunning, rather than Christian candour, that has passed the saying into a proverb. We have, indeed, the great man at the helm, who started deep as any in the world's miry pleasures; yet we trust we have all reason to hope the miracle may be on him. But otherwise, I have lived to see, that in general patriots who have been spendthrifts, are still only self-gratifiers by a softer name. And Harrison is a case in point."

When Betha's conductor addressed this latter part of his discourse to her, she was seated, for the free-breathing of a little air, in a windowed recess of one of the vacant ante-rooms near the galleries through which they were passing; for a sudden faintness had seized her at the mentioning of Harrison as having "committed a breach of honour and humanity to a trusting friend;" the idea flashing on her that it must be General Fairfax who was talking with her, and that Harrison had been the betrayer of

the secret packet now in her possession. If so, she felt how cruelly she had injured her uncle Leonard, by having suspected him, and uttered her suspicion to another, though that other was an obscure old man, and never likely to breathe it to a second ear; but still the injustice smote her to the heart.

General Fairfax, for it was indeed he, having seen her refreshed by the quiet of the temporary retreat she had found, as well as revived on entering it, by the soft pure air which wafted in from the lone quadrangle into which the window of that little room opened, he recommenced his account of Harrison. To show her, by that specimen, the sort of pretenders that would probably be offered for her hand, if Mariam Cromwell should have the power to introduce them; and against whom, by their marks, he sought to forewarn her.

He then briefly told her, that Harrison was the son of an opulent stall-keeper near Smithfield, and had early brought himself into notoriety before the magis-

trates of the city, by his connection with the incendiary London apprentices, who at that time, in their evil pranks, had broken into the Spanish ambassador's house in Bishopsgate-street: but certain impulses of zeal, though fanatical in its effects, being pleaded in extenuation of the riot, a few only of the offenders were condemned to slight confinement, and the rest let loose with a reprimand, and threats of severer punishment in the case of a second delinquency. But instead of contrition and amendment, these young rebels to order grew in strength, and, it may be added, in audacity too, by the new consequence of having the name of Leonard Baldry, the second son of the first man in the city, the wild banner-leader at their head. The times, meanwhile, lost their poise, and in the general struggle to replace the equilibrium, these apprentices took their share in the *mêlée*. All were intrepid as venturous; many generous as daring.

"And of such brave spirit we sometime believed this Harrison to be," con-

tinued Fairfax; "for though the butcher's knife might have been his inheritance, it was no reason with us to suppose it the metal of his nature. Besides, what true soldier ever thinks the worse of a comrade from any circumstance of mere birth or accident? But I did not know Harrison personally till he had risen to considerable rank in the Parliament's army; and then, though rough-suited in his manners, I followed others in yielding credit to the repeated assertion, that it was proof of his being only the more honest. He became even of the council with the chiefs of the Parliament; and I, never considering myself more than their officer, amply trusted him, with the implicit faith of brother soldier to brother soldier."

The General hesitated half a moment, then solemnly put a question to his most mutely attentive auditress.

"My young friend! Do you remember the awful event of the thirteenth of January, two years ago?"

Betha, surprised at the enquiry, and

confused by the pointed manner of it, nearly started from her seat, and, hardly knowing what she said, uttered in reply, another question:—Do you mean the death of the unhappy Charles?"

"I do," returned the officer; "and by the epithet you have used, and the tremor in the voice that breathed it, I see that your young heart is indeed that of a daughter of mercy. Innocent itself, it is touched by a tender sense of the one common erring nature amongst all men; and, whatever the offence or the condition of the offender, you compassionate the sufferer under chastisement!"

"Heaven knows I do!" And Betha, in saying this, looked up with her brimming eyes.

The General, regarding her with almost a devout reverence, resumed; but there was agitation now in his voice.

"My hand," said he, "had been raised, like the rest of my countrymen, against the royal councils, which were withholding from us the rights of our laws; and my hands assisted my countrymen in

pulling down the mightiest, who, misled, seemed ready to shut up our precious palladium from us. But some, when that mightiest was in our own fetters, sought to level the laws also; for, alas! sudden power sees no stay but its own will! A thousand evil passions became the people's voice! In fine, judgment unto death was pronounced on the *unhappy Charles Stuart!* My military post, as guard over the county of Middlesex, had prevented me being at the trial; but never did I expect such issue. However, when I heard the lawless result, I then strove all in the poor power of my reasonings, by letter to my colleague, the present Lord-General, to show the wound they were giving to the very heart of our own argument; and, as a natural consequence, to persuade the mitigation of the sentence to something more moderate than death. General Harrison volunteered to be the active medium in this pressing instance; and with an assumption of zeal for the honour of freedom, anxious as my own—for pity his nature never could even af-

fect! — he led me to suppose that his own vehement representations, backing my colleague's, to the council, were sure of gaining the object; and so he withheld me from breaking indeed from my post, and coming myself to the council, to pronounce my own free-born vote against the execution of its injustice. But I believed him! — and he was even on his mailed knees, by my side, praying Heaven, with me, to over-rule the passions of those men to reason, and therefore mercy, when of a sudden, Joyce, the vilest emissary of a disgraceful spirit of expediency, burst into the room, and proclaimed the deed done!

"Harrison leaped from his position, with such a laugh of Satanic exultation! He clapped his hands —— But I will not enlarge on the scene: suffice it to say, he had betrayed my trust in him; he had treacherously detained me from the council, where he thought I might have had influence, or he had never made me, as it were, privy to the act of blood, since I held the camp at Hounslow, posted in

protection of London during the transaction.

"Oh! could I, a husband, see such youth and innocence as yours almost within the grasp of such a man, and yet not warn you, sweet, sweet Betha!" and he pressed her hand parentally in his, "of the misery, the perdition of such a marriage?"

Betha, by the impulse of a gratitude which had no words, and with an increased horror of the regicide General, mingling with an almost filial sentiment for the just and humane veteran before her, returned the pressure of his hand between both hers; but feeling it a kind of contamination of her, even the supposition that such a marriage could have been possible for her to acquiesce in, under any circumstances, she forced her hardly-articulating lips to say, "It is— it must be, to the revered Sir Thomas Fairfax I am so unspeakably obliged! But you knew my mother. Oh, her daughter could more easily die than unite herself to any man conscience-

stained with the blood of the meanest fellow-being! But this man — he is one blot!" And Betha put her hands before her face, and shuddered to the soul.

"If you recognise me by what I have told you of him," returned Fairfax, "you must be in the confidence of some one of the few, with whom, for the sake of public tranquillity, the story has been entirely hushed up. Disgusted, I withdrew from acting with them; but still I am England's faithful son; — and you, her daughter. —— If it were your father who disclosed this of Harrison to you, I am satisfied he will never afterwards propose that man to the heart he had so well furnished with arguments against him!"

Betha knew it was not the story of this circumstance which had unfolded to her the character of Fairfax; but memory of the packet in her possession, wherein was written the evidence of its having been confided by the afflicted writer to this generous republican officer, and thence passed by him to some second faithless friend. The one tale did in-

deed point the eye immediately to the betrayed subject of them both; but after hearing the particulars of this just-recited act of treachery (an act Gervase did not suspect, he having only accused him of the comparatively venial additional crime of adding a dissimulating show of pity to his unjust judgment pronounced, by adopting the fashion with some, and Cromwell amongst them, of not being present at the awful example they had decreed) — she could not, therefore, a moment longer suppose that Harrison had been a second time intrusted by his late friend with an opportunity of insulting his confidence again. Hence the conviction returned upon her, that, whoever were the primary betrayer of the packet, it was ultimately left under her father's roof, instead of being sent on its destination; and, as combined treachery must be somewhere, she now could think no more where to fix it, but trembled for one innocent victim at least — the too faithful Gervase — should any discourse between Fairfax and her father lead to

such embarrassing of her as to produce suspicion respecting the fatal trust; and it being only by her knowledge of the contents of that trust, her hasty imagination had so quickly recognised the character of Fairfax to himself, she felt in so great a dismay of the possible consequences, she could see no resource but uttering the truth to him as far as she dared: yet of the packet itself she durst not speak. That must be sacred to Gervase's permission alone, should the opportunity of naming it ever occur again. And even then, could she bring herself to reveal to this deceived friend of the unfortunate, now without hope of repairing the injury done, the probable disgrace of some of those the nearest, perhaps the dearest to her, in life?

Her inward disorder became very apparent, while hurryingly, and in what words she hardly knew, she assured him that her father never spoke of any of the private affairs of the state to her; that he had never named either General Harrison or Sir Thomas Fairfax to her.

Here she paused; for she became at a loss how to avow, without betraying Gervase in some degree, how it was that she had heard of Fairfax at all in the way she had proved.

Betha's alarm created in her protector's mind the very suspicion of something extraordinary in hers she wished to avert. He perceived there was more than a mere denial of supposed circumstances, under the perturbation of her manner; and the next question naturally occurred of itself—"By whom, then, was the story told her?" And he gently besought her to confide the name to him; adding, that he would make no ungrateful use of the information, for he felt with gratitude that the impression made on her had been to his advantage; yet, it being a confidence of considerable bearing to him, he must entreat to know who the person was who had repeated it to her.

Betha now vehemently and truly declared, that she had never heard the story but from his own lips that very

evening. She had only learnt his character from — a friend — and, gaspingly, she there ended the sentence. How little did the General at that moment conjecture, that the cause of the changes of colour he saw in that lovely countenance, of the almost audible palpitations of her bosom, was keeping her faith with a poor old man! — He tenderly repeated her own response.

"But that friend?" He could not resist putting the question for his name, hoping that the blushing answer might give him knowledge of some young cavalier-patriot worthy of his esteem, and of the softer regard of so beautiful and interesting a creature.

"Oh, do not ask me!" returned she. "I must not say. I beseech you, do not press me. I know Sir Thomas Fairfax would be generous to any confidence; but in this case ——" and grasping his arm with agitated energy, she added — "You may see my inexperience; my weak heart, so ready to betray its feelings on any accident; — it alarms me at

myself! And, that I may not be made to consider this night perhaps the most unhappy of my life, I conjure you — my mother's friend! — do not urge me farther."

"Enough," returned the General: "pardon me the length I have pressed you. And," he added, for she had risen as if earnest to move on, "I shall now obey your movement, in leading you without further delay to your father. But, I trust, wherever we may meet hereafter, it will be on your part still regarding me as the friend of your mother. My interest must remain unchanged for you. And, by her name, remember — that should the occasion ever arrive when you might deem it in the power of myself, or of my wife, to be of much or little service to Mistress Baldry's daughter, you will command it! — My wife is my pride and my comfort; for she possesses a heart full of the noble sensibilities you so humbly term weaknesses in your own, and would rejoice in showing

you how near they are allied to the best of Christian virtues."

Betha's answer was brief, but grateful. The hurry of so many agitating discourses, in a place where she had expected to be overlooked as a mere child, and the dread of the threatening subjects of them all, some way or other, being against her peace, had now exhausted her spirits so much, and possessed her with such apprehension of any thing which might yet occur before the gala of the evening were over, that she could not but silently wish herself back, in the neglected quiet of Matchelowe Court, or, at any rate, withdrawn from the scene around her.

To this end, then, when her tremulous hand took its supporting station on the arm of her conductor, and he turned her steps again into the main gallery that led direct to the banqueting-hall, she begged him to do what she would not have courage to attempt herself, in the circle she would find her father, — to ask permission for her retiring for the night. — Fairfax indeed saw the necessity in her

pale cheek and tottering steps, and with some difficulty he brought her through the throng of liveried domestics, who stood near the head of the great table of entertainment, at which the chiefs of the company had been some time seated.

From one extremity to the other of the magnificent board, the gold and silver plate glittered in every form of sumptuous service: and the refreshments they contained commanded all that the most exquisite cookery, fruits, and conserves, and the costliest wines, could furnish. The whole was illuminated by superb chandeliers, hanging from the high-groined, gilded roof: and bands of the choicest musicians, in arcaded galleries, just under the dome, resounded their harmonies in a continued revolving tide of the noblest strains.

"What a drama is here!" muttered a voice to Fairfax, while he was pressing on with his trembling charge through the crowd, towards the seats of eminence, where the host and his intended most honoured guests were placed — "By

its portents, we might as well have kept our swords in their rust."

"Better our axes," re-whispered Fairfax, "then our swords would have made clean work, and Runny Mead's precedents done the rest!"

"That in *my* teeth, General!" returned the other, with a harsh laugh; "but I will prove the lopping to the purpose, or all on this board shall jingle for it!"

Betha was too near not to hear this little colloquy; and turning her head, saw President Bradshawe with the royal amethyst on his haughty neck, brush away through the throng, in an opposite direction from the table. She made no observation on what had passed, neither did Fairfax, and the next step or two brought them to the side of Geoffrey.

He sate at the head of the board, between the wife of Ireton and his intended bride. At the sound of General Fairfax's voice, announcing himself as the safe conduct of his lovely daughter to his side, President Baldry started, with a

show of no very pleased surprise in his countenance. Within, he thought the very devils were in league against him! But the next word from this new persecutor dispersed the frown in his mind; for his brow had instantly dispelled its cloud, by adding, that he had brought fair Mistress Betha from the charge of Colonel Baldry. Geoffrey then, half-rising from his chair, cordially thanked him; but also subjoining the prime question in his mind — "Leonard then is gone?"

"I apprehend so," returned Fairfax, shaking his head; "for I saw him, poor fellow! leaving the lobby, with company too likely to make the night out at a very different place from this."

Geoffrey's eyes danced with delight. Not so his daughter's. And while Frances Cromwell, with her usual gay urbanity, was welcoming her, and proposing to make room for her between Rich and herself, Betha's limbs were gradually failing under her; but unwilling to repose them again, where her agitations

were so likely to be increased, she languidly smiled her almost wordless acknowledgments, while her softly-pressing hand, still on the arm of her kind conductor, told him her gratitude, as she heard him performing his promise, in the pleaded request of her being allowed to retire.

Even before President Baldry could answer, and which he was gladly going to do in the affirmative, as Leonard had predicted, to prevent the civil necessity of inviting Fairfax to take a place by her side, Mariam Cromwell, with a pretty kind of scornful right to interference, begged the child might not be detained any later on their accounts, for she looked frightfully tired. Her Excellency, the Lady Deputy, made the same remark, though not with the same ungracious epithet; and, in spite of Frances's continued protests to the contrary, the assent was immediately pronounced by the then doubly-eager father; and, with reiterated thanks to General Fairfax, in his rapidly-articulated and most cour-

teous "Good night," he felt a bound at heart, little parental, when he saw the kind veteran turn away with his almost unobserving charge, to conduct her to the door of the private family part of the house, to which Mildred had been some hours retired.

A green baize door in the great lobby led into that wing. At parting there, just before it opened, Fairfax again warmly pressed her hand, and repeated, "Honoured, respected Betha," said he, "allow me to say again, from my heart, that if ever you, or any deservedly dear to you, need an honest man's help, in these times of many faces, remember, Thomas Fairfax is to be found, and his Dame with him, at Boston-House, near Brentford, where he still keeps his commonwealth station, though his truncheon be something shortened of its power!"

Betha's grasping hand thanked him; her lips could not. The door opened; she passed in; it closed again, and the General found himself alone. "Sweet young creature!" he ejaculated to him-

self as he turned away: "I would — and I would not — that thou shouldest need the friendship I offer thee; for thou art too lovely and fragile to buffet long with the coarse blows of this disjointed world."

A few minutes more carried him to his horse in the court-yard, and, mounting, he sped for his home; at least, that which he regarded as his temporary home, retaining it, in fact, for a distant friend, its original owner, Sir Edward Spencer, should any leniency of the times warrant his return. And, meanwhile, Sir Thomas Fairfax felt, that as the Parliament, in tribute of his military service, had made him master of the Boston domains, he possessed every Englishman's right to bestow the produce as best pleased himself; so, twice a year, the golden result of this generous gathering into his barns, went across the sea to the otherwise friendless wanderers of "good Acasto's line."

And so had been the first understand-

ing between the Lady Aphra de Matchelowe and President Baldry, when she quitted with her children their paternal home. But the stewards were different.

CHAP. XV.

Mildred had been more than an hour gone to her apartment and to rest, when Betha entered the quiet gallery of the dwelling-house. The poor soul-wearied girl did not seek the kind dame, to disturb her repose. But the tale will follow the reflective daughter of Geoffrey to her chamber that night, to commune with her long-waking hours there, during the loud continuance of the revelry in the gala quarter of the mansion, till Saint Paul's clock struck one, and the music ceased, and the carriages, with the departing guests, began to roll away.

At last all was still in the banqueting-hall and its galleries, and the courts were silent also. The clock again struck. It was the second hour from midnight, and a lone bugle followed the sound, and died away. Shortly afterwards, Betha

heard the well-remembered step of her father passing by her chamber-door to his own, from which only one vacant apartment, formerly her mother's dressing-room, divided her chamber.

She listened while he closed his door: for in the stillness of night, how instinctively watchful is the ear to every sound! And she listened, but with no return to her ear but the ticking of her watch; for the quiet of all disposing themselves to sleep, after the extreme fatigue of every excited sense, seemed to pervade the whole house.

Betha's thoughts were full of her beloved mother, and of the soft matron step to which she had so often listened with all the duteous fondness of a grateful, happy child, passing also from the adjoining chamber into her father's.—Her lonely spirit asked, should she ever have the chilling sound on her heart, of hearing the foot of Cromwell's proud and repulsive daughter treading on that hallowed path? "Oh, my mother! my mother!" lowly murmured she—"If the

spirits of the just made perfect are ever permitted to revisit this mortal life on deeds of ministry, my yearning soul tells me that thou wilt still be near thy doubly-orphaned child!"

Tears, filial, desolate, yet devout tears, followed this adjuration; and her pillow, that which her tender parent had so often smoothed during any incidental indisposition of her delicate child, now drank her uncomforted tears. And it was in the midst of these various but all-mournful impressions, in the deep silence of every thing around, that she thought she heard the door at the end of the gallery creak slowly on its hinges, and immediately afterwards a swift step approached towards her room, but with no louder noise on the matted floor than if some unslippered foot were hastening to the sick chamber it feared to disturb. Betha grew cold; but she started up, awe-struck, in her bed, at the strange correspondence of the circumstance with the nature of her anguished thoughts. What if the heavenly visitant were indeed

come! The pulses of her heart laboured while she continued to listen; but the step passed, and her watchful ear heard it reach her father's door. The door opened, closed, and stillness again succeeded.

Betha was now on her knees with clasped hands, praying with her whole soul — but in the depths of that soul — for her lips moved not. And the form of words it could hardly be said those thoughts took, then at the foot of her Maker, in earnest supplication for her father and herself, in this, she believed, solemn visitation: and when thinking how summoned! — by the vanities of that night! — her filial invocations became wrought to the utmost fervour of a raised imagination, till, at last, she sunk down again on her pillow in a kind of swooning tranquillity of awed resignation to whatever might be the result to her in this life.

Thus did she lie, as it were entranced, when she was aroused, not by the re-opening only of her father's door, but by

a voice speaking from it, evidently by the person who was preparing to pass through it again, and addressed to her father within the room.

"It is now right, for this time," said the speaker, whose voice she soon recognised to be that of Leonard; "but should it ever bring me up again on the same score, I swear, Geoffrey, by that pearl above all price, this damned stuff bought from me, that not you alone, but every ear in this your slavish city, shall hear of it!"

What answer her father made, if he did return any, could not have been heard even by the object of it; for in the instant Leonard finished speaking, he pulled the door forcibly to its close; and, with a much less noiseless step than that with which he had entered, hastened down the passage.

How were the thoughts and feelings of Betha now changed! No longer the spell of a sublime, though fearfully awful superstition, uniting the visions of the shadows of death with the incomprehen-

sible agency of beings belonging to the life which dwells in light eternal, — mingled in her faith with the clear revelations of her true Christian creed.

Her mother's spirit was indeed in its repose in heaven, where the troubles of this world could no longer disturb her. But she had heard a voice in that silent hour of night! — a ruffian's voice, which assuredly seemed to threaten her father! — for the manner of the utterance was so, though the words did not directly point the menace at him. And that ruffian was her uncle, whose lip had so lately touched hers in avowed kinsman's kindness: — her father's own brother!

Was it dishonour, or what was it he threatened? She could not answer herself; but the tone that pronounced it was deadly.

Not the movement of a feather was heard in the house afterwards to prevent the sealing of her eyes in salutary slumber: but it would not be. There were demons abroad that kept many an eyelid open that night,—the demons of man's

own wicked spirits. And they cumbered the air, and sate, like Incubus, on many a tossing, apprehensive victim, when all visible things were still, and only a sense of "the darkness which may be felt" pressed on the devoted bosom.

CHAP. XVI.

In the morning, when the pale and heavy-eyed Betha met Dame Mildred in the old family-parlour, she was told the carriage had been some time at the door; for it was the pleasure of President Baldry, that his daughter should return to Matchelowe Court immediately after she had taken breakfast. Betha, anxious to read in her father's countenance, if possible, some traceable idea of what might have been the subject of her uncle's menace, enquired whether or no she was to see her father before she set out. Mildred replied in the negative; briefly stating, that she herself had only been favoured with a sight of his worship for a few minutes. He was hurrying out to take horse for Saint James's, where the family of the Lord-General had pitched their habitation, to make respectful interro-

gation of how the ladies fared after his last night's entertainment.

Mildred repeated this in a manner which showed that she did not like the errand.

Betha then asked, how her father looked? Was it well or haggard? "As it might be," she honestly added, "from that last night's tax upon his spirits!"

"Well, and in high spirits!" returned her monitress. "But their course, my child, is not likely to suit you and me: so the quicker we move to our own quiet little *Zoar* the better!"

Notwithstanding Mildred's implication, Betha cheered when she heard her father looked well and cheerful; and with an answering smile of thanks she took the cup of coffee the good dame put into her hand, and drank it; but stopping at the parlour-door through which her monitress was hastening her, before she finally left it for perhaps a long, long time!—she gazed on all around the once familiar room, on the well-remembered cedar-panelled walls, hung with the portraits of the last gener-

ation of her family. There were her grandfather, Philip Baldry, in the robes of his three-times-repeated mayoralty; and on his right, the portrait of Petrina Maurice, his first wife, who had brought him the whole wealth of the Thames in its wide flow under the rich maritime arches of London-bridge, for her dowry: she was a noble-looking matron, and might have well become the coronet, painted to deception, of pearls and precious stones, on the forehead of his second and youthful bride, the Lady Eustacia de Matchelowe, whose almost infant-like face hung on his other side.

But Betha passed her eye on towards her father's picture, taken in the heyday of his early manhood, and decorated in all the gorgeous insignia of his merchant-presidentship. He looked in that picture as if he thought he could command the world, did not a softer expression show that he rather declined than aspired to it. On his right hand was her own mother's portrait, sedate yet lovely; and the eyes seemed to shine on her daughter, and the lip to

smile on her. Betha threw herself on her knees before it; and while her filial heart could not but pray, that no rival semblance might ever occupy the other side of her father's, she covered her face with her kerchief, and her heaving bosom showed the awakened sorrow there.

Mildred's affectionate sagacity easily conjectured the occasion of this burst of grief; and drawing towards her young charge, she gently took her in her arms, and raised her, acknowledging, indeed, though in few words, what her own notions were on the so-generally-rumoured subject; and adding, that though an evil spirit of vain-gloriousness, the bane often of even the best men — such as had led Philip Baldry to trouble his house, by marrying a woman of strange degree to the level of his kindred—might now beguile his honoured worship, her father, to the same snare with the Lord-General's daughter, — Betha should still take comfort; for Providence had manifestly provided a peaceful home for the orphan of the truly pious and humble-

minded matron who had given her birth. "Therefore," continued the dame, "turn away, my child, from this too proud mansion, and let us seek our heaven-guarded, pleasant wilderness!"

Betha's arms now encircled the neck of this almost second mother, and with a fervent aspiration to the universal Parent, to turn her confidence, indeed, wholly on Himself, she imprinted a kiss of silent gratitude on the cheek of the so faithful friend, rather than servant, of her she so heavily lamented.

They then proceeded to the carriage, and their homeward journey commenced. Mildred, considering it a duty, both to her master and her pupil, to refrain from further discussions of the recent past, withdrew into her habitual taciturnity; but pondering, indeed internally, on all that had offended her primitive taste, which had contemplated much of the late show as unseemly in a commonwealth; for she thought within herself, that it ill befitted any good citizen to go in velvet and fine linen there, when so many had not clothes

to cover them in the streets. She had no objection to see the grand array of the streets themselves, or of the civic procession that attended the city-watch, for both were the array of the body politic. But the pomps, the feasting, the courtly parade, and the ceremonies of salutation, she had seen in the President's house had turned her soul sick. All was abomination to her, and she too, when she withdrew from the gaudy assembly, had asked of herself, "Has not the blood of the tyrant, and the court of his proud queen, been shed and scattered in vain, to return upon us in many broods?"

Silently, therefore, she and her pupil travelled on through the busy streets of the city, which, at that advanced hour of the morning, appeared in their wonted simplicity. The timber-carved, gable-ended houses, some with over-shooting stories, others with wooden-galleries running before the upper windows, either way forming a covered walk, from chance of weather, to the shops beneath, were all restored to their usual homely mer-

cantile fronts; the embroidery and tapestry hangings had been taken in, at dawnlight by the several owners, for the next public occasion; and the procession-barriers removed, gave place to the free passage of crowds thronging on to their daily work: the conduits too, so lately flowing with the intoxicating draughts prepared by a little-suspected ambition, had resumed the pure well-spring of simple life; and Mildred beheld it pouring cool and clear into the pitchers of the cleanly serving-maids, who tripped out of the neighbouring dwellings, to replenish their household water-jars, with the gratulatory satisfaction of a wise matron who loved to look upon the signs of temperance throughout the land.

"Here," said she, inwardly, "I see the commonwealth as it ought to be!"

Betha scarcely observed any thing without; yet she did not brood on cherished melancholy; she was strengthening herself, according to the indeed true consolation which her revered companion had so recently spoken to her; and when

her eye did take cognisance of aught, it was when she looked towards that face of an unshaken probity, and blessed Heaven, in her heart, for having preserved this friend to her, whose pious and unflattering tongue would thus recall her wandering spirit from its despondent forgetfulness of the ever-watchful presence, in which "she lived, and moved, and had her being," by reminding her that it was so.

She indeed felt, that it is not enough to be taught these things once; it is not enough to have tasted and found how sweet they are: they must be written as frontlets to the eye; they must be as the signet to the hand; they must be the theme of discourse as we sit in our houses, as we walk by the way-side. For in every place, the tribulations of the world assail us; and in every place, the strength of the Lord is to be sought; and oh, the goodness of God! — it is often found of them who do not seek it!

"Shall I weep, with such a Father over all?" exclaimed the heart of Betha.

" No, no!" And she smiled, with heaven in that smile; for the faith her soul had besought, now calmed every agitated pulse, and her spirit turned to its rest as if no further care was hers.

Days after days succeeded, and the sweet sabbath of mind with which she had re-entered the retirement of Matchelowe Court, was not disturbed by any outward circumstance. No visitors came there to tell of public events, nor to repeat rumours concerning private ones; and, indeed, she almost began to hope, that as neither the seeming kindness of Frances Cromwell, nor the supposed approaching relationship of Mariam, had brought either of them to see her, that the marriage with her father (the apprehension of which had cost her so great a pang) was no longer contemplated by any of the parties; that he had not been to Matchelowe Court since the city festival, was also another argument for believing what she wished: for though long absences were his ordinary course, yet it seemed reasonable, that, were his nuptials in pro-

gress, he would come, to at least prepare his daughter to honour the change in his family. Betha, therefore, soon returned to her customary occupations, with that happy contentedness which belongs to a naturally grateful spirit, in the bosom of quiet, and surrounded by those only who gladly administer to her service, or others to whom her own benevolence made her minister to them.

Some of these were grey-headed cripples, the pensioners of former times, and the decrepit widows of their elder brethren, who had not long survived the transfer of Sir Eustace's birth-right to his republican brother: these Betha had sought out from the hovels into which those, who had not strength to seek shelter farther away, had thrust their poor war-worn limbs for refuge, when Sir Eustace's hospital for these veterans was battered down to a heap of rubbish, because its inmates would not throw up their old caps on the thirtieth of January, and cry, hurrah! for the downfal of their king and former bounteous master.

Betha had heard of their condition from Gervase, and the numbers being greatly thinned by the rapid scythe of want and a broken heart, she found small difficulty in stretching her little store of pocket-money to the frugal necessities of the survivors. She removed them into some comparatively comfortable cottage-dwellings, vacated of their former tenantry soon after the family of the manor-house had left their home, and the small flourishing business in the village of Matchelowe with them. In those empty habitations, decently fitted up for the reception of them she sent there, Betha disposed her new pensioners. And she often stole out, sometimes attended by Gervase or his son, wrapped in her grey mantle and close hood, to visit the bed-ridden or the feeble blind, and to read to both from the Book of Life! — that well-spring which refreshed herself, while it was as unction to their souls!

Mildred accompanied her whenever medical aid was needed; for the dame was really possessed of knowledge in the

healing art, and bestowed it wherever sought. But age being the chief cause of the infirmities she attempted to cure, and having more than once set her lancet to the loyal blood yet warm in the quickly-palsying heart of her patient, and found the health-seeking remedy unavailing, she began to deem her struggle against nature in them a sort of tyranny. And also she found frequent compelling influences to withdraw, when hearing benedictions from their trembling lips on those, her fealty in another quarter constrained her to regard as a malediction there.

Betha, on the contrary, in her services of charity, thought of nothing but the wants she relieved: and her prayers were ever ready to mingle with those of the dying suppliant, whether he invoked mercy on his own head, or on that of friend or foe; whether he clasped a broken crucifix to his expiring bosom, or that sacred volume, which bears in its leaves the evidence of the Bread of Life! — It was the Saviour they all wor-

shipped, and, with theirs, her spirit was at the foot of his cross.

From these old men, as well as from Gervase, she often heard the names of "Generous Sir Eustace and his angelic lady," repeated with a variety of anecdotes descriptive of their goodness; and they compared her own visits of tender ministry to those of the Lady Aphra, when she too came to bring the best consolations of the rich to the sick couches of the poor. The noble mother then often left her eldest and as noble son with the more convalescent, to give the cordial of his jocund spirits to the old soldiers of his veteran grandfather.—Then, in those hours of grateful, unlocked hearts, did they deeply imbue his mind with all the gallant emulations of his race. And, perhaps, never highly-endowed school for military glory sent forth a more animated aspirant for martial deeds, than did those poor maimed men from their beds of cicatrised wounds, and their crutched pathways.

The plundered field and the sacked town had nothing to do in their discourses. It was the gallant spirit of meeting breast to breast the enemies of their king, their laws, and their country. In short, the camp-creed of these veterans was very simple: "The honest cause is the right cause; the right cause is the brave cause; so we march gaily on, with *Dieu et mon Droit* on our banner!"

Would it were always that of their leaders too! and then, neither royal nor republican sword would so often have cause to blush at the fields both have sown with human blood; a sacrifice to the idol Aggrandisement, the Moloch of perdition, whether the priest wear a crown or the cap of liberty.

Such was the soldier's catechism they taught the eldest son of their master, and the gallant boy did not forget a tittle of it. Neither did these venerable sons of Mars find an unwilling ear in their present young visitant. But that delicate attention to female shrinkingness from

scenes of violence which is never absent from the truly brave mind, being in full force with these humble heroes of De Matchelowe, nothing was related by them of their veteran fields to their gentle auditress, which could show any of those hideous points in even the fairest warfare, which the lustre of the gallant host, and the glory of the victor-day, may conceal; but still they are there, and the manly heart shudders at them.

Yet with no such reserves had their honest tongues discoursed with the son of their benefactor. They showed the soldier's life as it is; they showed the ruffian-part of human nature, which the sword, as a calling, was permitted to hold in check or subdue; they showed, that until the spirit of Christianity doth in reality universally prevail, men will be selfish, and oppress their fellow-men; and what the laws of mutual justice cannot reach, then, of necessity, must come the arm of self-defence. Therefore, they who ridicule the principle of a religion of the camp, by presuming that the religious man could

not be of the warrior profession — one that must raise his arm against his fellow-man, when so directed, might as reasonably shut the door of the church upon the magistrates of a city, because they pronounce sentence of punishment and death on certain inhabitants who have outraged the properties and persons of others. In short, magistrates and their officers are the executive guardians of the safeties of each particular city or country, where they hold their stations for that purpose; and, on the same principle, armies are the executive guardians of the safeties of one country from the aggressions of another — or, and, alas! when such last resort is applied to, how great is the sin of him who makes it necessary! — when a people fall infuriated on each other; — and then the disciplined soldier is called in, both by mercy and justice, to strike down the murderous brands of brother against brother. In such a moment, who will deny on which side the officer of humanity and religion appears? The veterans of the old school

of British arms poured this brave unction on the young head of the heir of a long race of loyal and true; and, while listening to the narrative of many a struggle in mortal combat, his countenance only expressed mute attention; but when a generous deed followed it, to the stricken foe, then his face blazed with an answering emulation; — or, when the anecdote told the reverse, of some cruel stroke in their sight on the vanquished head, he shuddered, and pronounced all such victors "Dastards, if they durst!" It was a sentiment brave as the hearts of his instructors; and, exulting in their approbation, he felt double delight in trying to wield the heavy and still-hoarded arms of the little company; in buckling on their cuirass and their morion, and making the owners put to proof how he could parry or stand the blows of their broadswords on his stripling head and shoulders.

"Oh!" exclaimed one of them, while relating to Betha some of these incidents; one who in former times had borne the

title of Captain of the Invalids, "where-ever that brave boy is — and whether his noble father be living or dead, — I steadfastly believe, and shall say it in the words of a Book, hypocrites have strangely defiled — 'I have been young, and now I am old; but never have I seen the righteous forsaken, nor the son of the faithful man begging his bread!' Therefore, lady, take it not amiss, when I declare my conviction, that my son, — who is somewhere under the impress-ment of these new rulers, fighting battles with his arm, his heart takes no share in, — may yet live to see the heir of good Sir Eustace, if not himself, ride into these courts again, in the noble array his gal-lant race were wont!"

Betha could have wished such a cir-cumstance in the family history; and she did her father the credit to suppose it would be his desire also, were it likely to come to pass without the triumphant re-turn of that other family, to eject whom so much blood had already been shed, and to reject whom so much more was,

even then, pouring out on the fields of Scotland. Hence, when these natural forebodings of affectionate hopes did break out from the full bosoms of the poor pensioners her kindness had melted to the utterance of their inmost thoughts, she generally remained pensively silent. But when their language became too strong for the caution necessary in a place where any of the lawless boys belonging to the other few inhabitants of the village of Matchelowe might chance to stroll within hearing, and, from mischief alone, report the readily-deemed treasonable expressions against the republic, she checked the dangerous discourse, with the unanswerable persuasion — "For her sake, if not for their own, to refrain from uttering sentiments, which their own principles must tell them could not but be wounding to the daughter of a sworn upholder of the commonwealth."

With such humble though high-principled associates, did Betha spend many of her hours; and their dames taught her the use of the distaff and the spinning-

wheel; occupations with which she loved to vary the more ornamental employments of her embroidery-frame and tapestry-loom.

"Were ours the dark days of papacy," observed Mildred, smilingly, one day to her, when she was making up with her own hands a linsey-woolsey garment for one of these, her aged and palsied instructresses in the management of the spindle which had spun the comfortable material, "I would say, thou wert educating thyself to be a lady abbess; thinking to cloak thy soul's wants, by thus abundantly clothing the unraimented bodies of all manner of people, good and bad."

Betha smiled in return, and remarked, that she did not take in ill compliment that alleged resemblance to the dark days of papacy; for, assuredly, clothing the naked was a command of the brighest days of light; and she could not but hope that, though a stanch Lutheran, her destiny might still have something of the nun in it — to live secluded where

she was, far from the vain and frightful world — (then she spoke most seriously), till her father, seeing the commonwealth established in peace, and her yet unwedded parent, might recall her to his side, to minister to him, as became an affectionate and devoted daughter.

She sate, musing thus, at the close of a fine evening in August, something more than a month after the city festival; and being near the open casement of the oriel window of the room where she was sitting, her thoughts gently glided away, from some recollections of that almost dream-like sudden drawing up and falling again of the scene of the busy and troublous world, at once upon her, to the mildly beautiful and soothing objects of secluded nature around her.

The room being the supper-chamber, Dame Mildred was quietly pursuing her customary knitting at the hither end, by the lamp-illumined board, served with the fruits of the season for the simple repast. This apartment was on the ground-floor; and the bayed window Betha oc-

cupied, commanding a wide and unobstructed view southward and eastward, by the height of the raised level on which the house stood, she contemplated, with the most devotional feelings of admiring gratitude, the benignity of the sublime expanse of the heavens, vast and serene, as if it were indeed the curtain of the Holy of Holies, beyond which spread the eternal mansions of the blessed of mankind. Before her lay the silvery moonlight, as if reflected from that sacred planet of the sky, to show where the angel of the last trumpet might take his stand, and blow the awful clarion that was to summon all sleepers to awake to the everlasting day!

The radiance of this beautiful sentinel orb, stretched from side to side of the smooth lawn in front of her window, and extending to the white balustrades of the terrace overlooking the Bloom-Shaft field, lay along its green surface also with so vivid a light, that it seemed as if she could discern even the motion of its grass waving under the transitory night breeze.

But the more distant parts of the field, those nearest the latest-raised parliamentary outworks, were cast into such deep shadow by the embankment and flanking redoubt, nothing moving there could have been visible. In the day-time, when she looked out from that side of the house, or had to cross the lawn in that direction, she often regretted the umbrageous elm grove and vistas of branching limes, which would have screened her from the curious gaze of chance wanderers into the meadows, within sight of the dismantled mansion; or the sometimes ruder surveillance of bold eyes, pacing the field ramparts opposite the terraces of her lonely walks. In fact, nothing now sheltered the timid glance of the female occupants of the house, when passing round it on their several services of duty, from the unimpeded observation of that embattled quarter; with its bristling accompaniments of mounted cannon, and the scaring passing to and fro of the men on duty when changing guard; — for day shewed every scene. Towards evening,

or at night, the indistinctness of the hour, by throwing all these various objects into one continuous dusky line, along the darkening horizon; or opposing it to the ethereal hue of a starry or moonlight sky, gave a calm grandeur to that warlike view, which gradually disposed the mind to corresponding yet different musings; pleasing the fancy of the young contemplator with recollections of scenes she had read in the pages of chivalry (the old library of Matchelowe Court being still full of such books), when the bulwark was raised against the enemies of Christians in an infidel land, and the host of heaven hovered over the slumbering camp, and blessed the repose of its heroes.

All, on the present night of Betha's contemplations, was still and in rayless darkness along the rampart line nearest to the house; and the same silence seemed to prevail in the vast chain of works which more distantly fortified the opposite northern quarter of the town; where, indeed, at certain wide divisions,

a watch-fire was seen through the higher embrasures of the bastioned points, and, now and then, the colours of the commonwealth, swinging heavily from their planted staff, in the awakening gusts of the night wind.

Betha's musing eye passed from object to object in this visionary way of comparing past with present things; when, having again turned her gaze to the broad sea of light on the bosom of the Bloom-Shaft field, she observed, that the increased up-rise of the moon had so shortened the shadows of the embankment there, that the little wooden bridge which crossed the trench of the redoubt on the field side had become visible to her. And, almost in the very instant of this observation, she discerned a dark object moving on it. Her eye became riveted to the appearance, for it came on, in direct motion, across the field, apparently towards the point where she sate. When it reached quite the centre of the field, where the moon shone in her almost daylight brightness, the astonished Betha

then perceived that it was some black towering-like object, borne along, by what agency she could not discern, and that a single figure of a man, by the height and waving feather in his cap, walked by the side of it.

While she was gazing, she called to Dame Mildred to come and see what was approaching; but not being answered, she looked round, and then, not finding her, she supposed she might have fallen asleep in her chair behind the lang-settle; and Betha rose to waken her, to give her opinion on what she saw; but she had left the room. Her pupil returned to the window to watch the further progress of the object; and the moment she re-appeared there, she saw Gervase hastening towards her. After his having brought in the fresh fruit for hers and the dame's supper, and taken his own in the hall, he was passing along the terrace, when he chanced to espy the very thing which then excited Betha's surprise and curiosity.

"Oh, lady!" cried he, "do you see that yonder?"

Betha replied in the affirmative, with an expression of wonder at what it could be. Gervase drew close to the window, his aged voice hardly daring to articulate the import of his thoughts. "It is an awful sight!" was his tremulous whisper. "Just at this time, in that fatal year I told you of, I saw the same dark shapes pass away from this house over that field. And the moon shone on them then on that very spot, and then a cloud closed over the moon, and I saw them no more."

"What do you speak of, Gervase?" enquired Betha, with something of his evident superstition affecting her own mind, while feeling unable to withdraw her eyes from the advancing object.

"Of the night of my dear lady's departure from this place," answered he, in the same awe-struck tone. "She and her health-blighted child were taken away, as I told you, in an old damp machine, too likely to prove the coffin of

both; and a something like a burial-pall over it, just as you see it returning; and his honour, President Geoffrey, walked by the side of it. Oh, lady! yon sight bodes no good to him nor his."

A cold dew broke out on the forehead of his daughter at this frightful presage of the hoary-headed speaker, and she had no words to answer, for the object before her did indeed wear all the appearances she now remembered he had described, when he first told of her aunt's banishment, with her young son in illness, whose fate had since remained unknown. She could not but recollect also, and with a chill that went through her whole frame, that when she afterwards ventured to ask her father about her aunt and this poor boy, he frowned — a look very rare with his always complacent features, — and said, "Whomever the commonwealth has condemned, it is your duty, as well as mine, to forget they ever existed."

The silencing answer then rose to her now with a fearful possible import: —

"And did the unhappy lady die then? and are the dead revisiting their own?" her heart tremblingly enquired of itself.

Gervase suddenly exclaimed — "There is the cloud on the moon too!" And so it was: the field became dark, and its moving object was lost to sight. The old man caught the parapet of the window to prevent his failing limbs sinking under him. "O! my master, my master!" murmured he, "how is it that I live to see these things? O! what is about to be done, that even the grave may not give rest to thy race?"

"Gervase," rejoined Betha, still more appalled, but with solemn earnestness, "your feelings must not create injurious suspicions against the innocent. Go into the old library: — its door from the garden is still on the latch, — and I will come to you as soon as I have discovered what that strange object is, and tell you. But, Gervase, do not accuse any, even in your thoughts. Pray, pray, I be-

seech you, for all who belong to your master's house!"

"Whatever betide," returned he, with answering agitated solemnity, "may the Just One's shield be over thee! I shall be on these feeble knees till I hear that angel voice again."

Betha heard the old man's tottering, receding steps, while his not less frail hands were feeling his way along the wall of the house, which the over-clouding of the moon, and the dimness of his sight, obscured into almost total darkness. And she was listening to distinguish when she might suppose he had arrived at the door of the long family-deserted room, it being at the extremity of the same side of the building with the window at which she sate, when she observed the door of the apartment she was in slowly open, for the lighted lamp yet remained on the untasted supper-table, and Mildred re-entered. She looked very pale, and turned her gaze enquiringly from side to side, then direct at Betha and the open window. Betha

rose from her seat with redoubling dismay, and asked, in as collected a tone as she could assume, whether she had seen that extraordinary sight?

"What sight?" was her immediate response, hastily approaching her charge. "Who told you of any sight?"

"I saw it myself," replied Betha, answering her alarmed question in a voice of augmented terror, since she now understood that Mildred connected something to be hidden concerning this already sufficiently mysterious appearance: "I saw it cross the Bloom-Shaft field like a hearse, carrying the dead, and then all vanished into black darkness."

Mildred went up to the window, and looked towards the field. The clouds were beginning to break away from the path of the moon as suddenly as they had obscured her, and the flood of transitory brightness was again spreading over the greensward. But now, the long shadow of the shaft lay athwart the track of light, as if a bar or a bridge crossed it. "How marvellous are thy

doings!" cried Mildred, casting up her eyes, with spread hands to the heavens, "The bar and the bridge are both of thy laying, and man cannot prevail against it."

Betha feared to question her, and she stood silent, gazing on the unusually excited countenance of her monitress.—Mildred then hastily closed the casement; and turning to her wondering charge, told her, she had come to see that there were none of the servants in the room, or within hearing of any discourse there. For that her master, President Baldry, after having himself summoned her thence, by the beckoning of his finger at the unclosed door, to reveal to her a secret of some importance, had sent her now to prepare his daughter for hearing something extraordinary from his lips; and, indeed, to require a conduct, in consequence, which might hereafter need the utmost strength of her filial principles to perform.

Betha listened with a gathering awe. "Tell my father," returned she, "that

I am ready to hear, and, I trust, in the power of Him who is in heaven, to obey what he may command."

Mildred then left her. All was now mute expectation within her, excepting the short, troubled sigh of supplicating devotion for her father and herself, when she heard his approach to the room.— The quickness of his step reminded her of the same sounds when he passed her chamber on the night of the festival to his own; and then a shudder came over her, as she recollected the gliding tread that followed them, and the succeeding words of dreadful import from his brother Leonard. Could he be connected with the apparition of this night also — be it living or dead?

She could hardly ask her agitated spirit the question, before the room-door opened, and her father entered.

He appeared to have thrown off the cloak which had enveloped him in crossing the field, for Betha could not doubt it was he she had seen in the single human figure, moving before that shrouded

object. His cap was yet on his head; but the long full feather which had floated on the night-breeze seemed also laid aside. He closed the door behind him, and then hastily approaching his daughter, who had tremblingly risen to meet him, he took her hand in silence; and leading her to the high-screened lang-settle, near the large fire-stead, heaped with its fragrant autumn boughs, he seated her there, being the place farthest from chance of listeners; and sitting down by her, abruptly said —

"Betha, you once asked me, whether the boy, the ill-omened godson of a justly-rejected race, shared his infatuated parents' exile, or had found better fortune in an early grave!"

He paused, and looked steadfastly in her fluctuating face; for the nameless terrors which the extraordinary impressions of Gervase had just awakened, connected with this very child, again rushed over her mind, and left her no power to speak nor look up; so much did she dread, for the poor old man's

sake, that her father should observe and question how greatly she was disturbed.

He continued, "Enquiries that cannot have an aim, excepting the gratification of an idle and often dangerous curiosity, it has ever been my rule to disappoint in answer; but when circumstances change, when duty may be called upon to give a point to such answers, then I weigh the worth of the person before I make my frank reply. Betha, are you to be trusted by your father?"

Betha could scarcely articulate her reply to this portentous appeal; but she did, and with the emphatic sentence, "If Heaven is my help, I may be worthy!"

"I am satisfied," returned he, "and I proceed to fully answer your former question: — That boy is now under this roof."

Betha, thrown completely off her guard, by the suddenness of so unexpected a disclosure, uttered a surprised cry of hardly-suppressed emotions, and the words — "Is he alive?" nearly burst from her lips. But she checked herself in time,

though not without snatching his hand, and gazing trembling on it, as if she could read the fate of her poor young cousin there.

"What is it that alarms you thus?" asked he. "These female sensibilities are the very enemies we apprehend in reposing confidences of any moment with your sex: they are worse traitors often than open treacheries!"

At this reproof she burst into tears, and the salutary flood relieved the mentally-excited bodily agitations which her father, not possibly suspecting their cause, had naturally ascribed to girlish weakness alone; and the remark touching her with apprehension of his displeasure, the daughter's heart overflowed.

He continued: "I am not angry with you, my child; but you must remember that the daughter of a republican statesman, is placed in a station where she must often call to mind the women of Rome in its commonwealth, and of Sparta in its glory, as her exemplars. How few of them ever wept or trembled! Betha,

you must not, in any case, give way to tremors and fear! But in this, of my present confidence, there is no cause for alarm, provided you obey, strictly to the letter, every injunction I shall lay upon you."

Betha now sate with dried, but downcast eyes, in breathless attention.

He proceeded:—"And besides, I have a reason which it is not my purpose at this time to communicate to you, which ought to counterbalance any timidity you may feel, in the idea of my yet farther extending my protection to this youngest branch of an attainted line."

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed she, "how can I feel aught than honour of my father, at this intimation of his giving a shelter and a home to the child of them who were ever so kind to me? Indeed, I cannot fear to obey you in such a duty!" And Betha looked up with an illumined countenance, that told her father he had a most willing listener.

"This is something of what I expected from you," resumed he. "They

were amiable persons in private life: children and women consider no farther; but I must teach better judgment to you, Betha: — that, however, hereafter. Meanwhile, know that you are to be my deputy in personal charge of this boy. That he is my care at all, has arisen from an excess, perhaps, of fraternal feeling — but that may pass. — Thus it is: — To impede the act of attainder against his father was impossible. Neither could I interfere for favour to his eldest son; for, young as he was, when he left this country, he had sufficiently shown the haughty stock out of which he sprung — the insolent race of his mother's house! And seeing that one contumelious member of it, ended his days in the dust at Newbury; and the insults of another suffered punishment, less to the taste of a spurred knight, under the headsman's halbert; it would ill have become me, a thorough-bred descendant of the best citizens that ever stood by Magna Charta, to have sought a recall for that third off-set, already showing fruit of so

malignant a tree; a boy, whose very first act of manhood would have been some treason against the commonwealth —to disgrace the blood of Philip Baldry by his connection with it!—No, no! that spurious current from our good old fountain, must remain for ever cut off, in the desert whereunto it is turned!"

Betha gazed at her father, again appalled at the scornful vehemence with which he denounced his brother's son, who could not have been more than a child when he incurred all this perpetuated hatred; for the expression of Geoffrey's countenance declared it came from no gentler impulse.

"With regard to his mother," continued he, "she affected the fashion of meekness: but I had reason to know her well, and I disdained her courtly condescensions to my wife and daughter; but I bore with them, to repay with interest, when the republic should proclaim her husband a discovered traitor, then out on his perfidious errand, canvassing foreign courts, on plea of com-

mercial treaties, but truly for armed mercenaries, to bring back chains instead of merchandise, for the tyrant's bondmen! Then, though he had wrought evil on my name, on the great Exchange of London, by his treachery——" Geoffrey paused an instant, and did draw his hand over his burning forehead at this stigma on an innocent brow his own deserved; for he knew that the perfidy and the treachery were his. Sir Eustace never swerved from the commercial objects of his embassy; but his supplanter's tongue readily formed the easily-accredited tale, and the false brother took the coveted forfeiture as a just judgment.— Memory told him this while he spoke; but conscience was yet silent, and he proceeded even more proudly—"But no man's delinquencies, however near in kindred, could touch my character:—I protected his wife in this house by the sole influence of that character—as the sister of Geoffrey Baldry! And when the inexorable equality of retributive justice pronounced her and her children

sharers in the attainder of her husband, even then I stood between her and the dungeon, that might have been her proud nobility's charnel-house, and sent her safely over sea.

"This boy, this Henry, was to be her companion, then a child not more than six years old — he had drank in the serpent's poison with his mother's milk! — But I thought on my father, whose blood was in that young sprout; and a vague wish crossed me to antidote the nurtured mischief, and make him one of the truer seed. Accident seconded the impulse. Suffice it to say, I withdrew his mother and himself from the sentence over them, by taking them by night from this house, to a coach ready placed beyond the redoubt wall, which soon conveyed them to the river wharf, where they were to embark for Holland. I protected her to the last. But in passing from the wherry to the Dutch yawl, the boy slipped his footing, and dropped between the vessels. The shriek of the mother, already on the deck, gave ample notice of it. I know

not how it was, but in the bustle that ensued I saved the child, unassisted by one; and, in the continuing confusion and the darkness, bore him away. I need not explain further, Betha. The boy is a heavy charge to me — and I weary of the subject."

Geoffrey was rising from his seat with an englooming brow, when the full heart of his daughter ejaculated, "Oh, not so! the friend of the friendless will bless you for such goodness!" And she felt it blessing herself in the cheering light it seemed to cast on her father's character, which, alas! though she had not acknowledged it to herself, she had found circumstances gradually darkening on her soul; and joyfully she added, "The gratitude, too, of the mother, whatever may have been her errors! — oh, what a bliss to both offending parents, to have had their child preserved by the most generous of brothers!"

"They never knew of it," returned Geoffrey, with cold contempt; "and if they had, the hearts of courtiers are inca-

pable of gratitude. In short, the night was dark, and the river only partially lighted by lamps at the prows of the vessels. No one knew I had saved the boy; and my resolution to save him for the commonwealth alone, decided me in the instant. His mother sailed away to Holland, with the belief that he had sunk to a watery grave; and, after a few maternal lamentations, natural on such occasions, doubtless her husband would teach her thanks to Heaven, at least, for there being one the less to bear about in the burthen of an exile's eleemosynary ways of supporting existence."

Geoffrey smiled, with all the wonted grace of his usually complacent countenance, while uttering the last remark. But the recital, brief as it was, had deprived the face of his daughter of that glowing delight so lately kindled there. "Alas! alas!" cried she, "is the condition of his parents, then, so very wretched in their banishment, that the loss of a beloved child is preferable to his living to endure it with them? Oh,

merciful Providence, how dare we stand before Thee, when man punishes thus?"

. Her father looked round on her: for he had risen proudly from his seat, with the inward exultation of one who beholds the objects of his envy thrown from their superior elevations, and sets his foot upon their necks, and waves the banners of his triumphs over them, and shouts in their ears — "Down! down! — for thou art fallen!"

"Betha!" rejoined he, approaching her with all the consciousness of high self-importance towering on his brow, "though I am your father, and have, therefore, right to command your seeing through my eyes alone, and understanding by my judgment alone, I have condescended to inform your reason thus far in detail, concerning the object of my present trust. But if, hereafter, the idea should ever cross your woman's fancy that things occur with regard to this boy you cannot comprehend, remember, that the responsibility to the Providence your childish presumption has just invoked, is

mine, not yours! Your duty is implicit faith in me, and, therefore, unqualified obedience to me. I shall now sum up the remainder of my information to you in a more general manner."

He then proceeded to say, that he had reared the boy with the utmost care from the moment of his mother's departure; but there existed a disease in his mental and corporeal faculties that never could be cured. Hence it was necessary to keep him in the strictest privacy. But some mischances had occurred, which made it prudent to remove him, not merely from the asylum in which he had passed his childhood to that time, but he must be conveyed into the country, to a much more remote place of refuge. That place was to be beyond the Severn, in Worcestershire. And then Geoffrey communicated to his daughter, that she and her monitress were to be partakers in the journey, and take up their residence, for a brief while, under the same roof. He added, that the boy's health too might be benefited by the change,

and his spirits revived by more liberty in the open air, than he could possibly be indulged with where he had been; that is, the liberty of exercise within the high walls of the gardens belonging to the old place, Castle Arelby, to which he was now going to be sent. When once there, he must never be allowed to stray beyond them; though, indeed, for his own sake, he had not been intrusted with knowledge of whom he really was. "For," continued her father, "I soon became aware, that, in spite of every proper discipline to subdue it, there is an incipient arrogance in his disposition, hidden under the quiet silence of his common deportment, that would speedily break bounds to mischief, did I drop a hint to him of his being my nephew. And yet he has a cloudy kind of recollection — something that, indeed, savours of his distempered brain — of his former infancy, with personages and pageantries, but confusing circumstances, and confounding identity of persons, even his

own self with others, till the whole scene of vague memories becomes a chaos."

Betha melted at heart during this sad painting of her young kinsman's maimed intellects; and when her father ceased speaking, she ventured to enquire whether he retained any recollection that the place to which he was now brought had been his earliest home? And then, with a filling tear, she did not permit to escape her eyelid, when her father answered "None!" she mournfully repeated her promise, and in words the colour of her thoughts, "to do all in her power to soothe the imbecile wanderings of the poor innocent, and administer to his health and comfort."

Geoffrey replied, her obedience would be so far well; but she must never forget in such soothings that he was ignorant of her relationship to him; also, that he was no natural idiot, only of strangely-aspected faculties, just remembering enough of the dangerous past to bewilder himself. And he enjoined her in no way to assist him out of the laby-

rinth. "Its density," added Geoffrey, "is his security." Her father then told her, that the story he was taught to believe of himself was, that he was the orphan of parents who had suffered on the Cavalier-side in the late civil contest; and that President Baldry had rescued him from the most abject species of degradation, by taking him under his personal sanctuary. Geoffrey finished his account, by telling her, that when she saw him, she must address him by the name of Benomi.

"He is the son of sorrow to us all! So I gave that name to him, to remind him always, that he owes gratitude at least to those who feed, shelter, and keep him alive. Betha, remember those are to be your arguments of comfort. Now, I will lead you to him."

CHAP. XVII.

When Geoffrey put his daughter's hand through his arm to conduct her as he said, she suddenly recollected the old library, and the anxious lone watcher there, awaiting whatever explanation she had to make of that mysterious arrival. Oh! could he guess that it was the living Henry de Matchelowe who had re-passed that field of fitful light and darkness, in the same shroud-like vehicle in which, nearly six years ago, he had been taken thence, how dauntlessly would the feeble steps of that faithful servant bear him to the feet of that beloved child, who could no longer recognise the devoted creature which had so often pressed the honoured infant's lips to his!

These thoughts made Betha waver for a moment, and hold back, as if meditating going somewhere else before she

proceeded with her father; but as instantly recollecting the impossibility of her doing so under her present circumstances, or, indeed, of visiting the library at all until she had separated from him for the night, she gave immediate way to the quickness of Geoffrey's movements from the supper-room; and entering one of the many diverging galleries out of the great hall near it, shortly found herself in the old painted-windowed passage that led direct to the suite of apartments appropriated by her father to his own especial use, whenever he chanced to come to the manor-house.

He entered the room which he called his private cabinet, and from which his occasional bed-room opened. Both these apartments she had frequently seen when Mildred was preparing their costly fittings-up for his rare visits. They were both hung with arras, rich, and still very handsome, though of some antiquity; and at the hither end of the cabinet-room, a door was in the arras, to which point Geoffrey straight led his daughter.

He opened it, and entered with her into what she had always considered merely a book-closet of the papist priest, who, in the preceding century, had occupied those very chambers. But her father turned down, by a hinge, one of the book-shelves, and a door, which had formed the apparent back of the closet, instantly swung before him; and a low stone porch presented itself, leading into what she afterwards learnt had formerly been the sacristy of the chapel. And the chapel, long closely walled-up, adjoined it.

Betha was too much surprised at sight of this unknown place to make a remark, nor, indeed, did she like to venture any where she perceived so much caution; fearing that the dangerous circumstances of that attainted child must be extreme, when her father found all this mystery necessary, even under his own roof. Geoffrey took a key from his pocket, and opening an interior door from the porch, brought his daughter into this long-forgotten chamber.

It showed bare stone walls, entirely stripped of whatever might have once adorned them; with a vaulted roof, and no furniture, that she could discern, except in one corner, where there was a large arched recess, and from its carved ceiling hung a solitary lamp. And by its dim light (for the place felt damp) she saw a boy sitting, of apparently very slender make, leaning his head on his hands, that rested on a table, on which some untasted refreshments stood. He did not look up from his melancholy posture at the sound of the approaching steps, until Geoffrey called him by name.

"Benomi," said he, "I have brought my daughter to accept the tender of your services."

The boy then hastily raised his head; and he rose also himself, with so indescribable an air of inherent gracefulness, that Betha's eyes were fixed with pitying admiration on him, and she could have fallen upon his neck, and wept her kindred welcoming: for the face he had

turned towards her during the silent bow he made to the announced visitant, expressed an uncomplaining sense of utter desolation that smote her to the heart. What a dungeon-room was this, she felt, to bring that invalid boy to!—and that in his father's house! She looked on him, and was speechless as himself. His face was fair, and thin, and pale, yet with exquisite symmetry of features; and the lucid blue eyes, which shone under the delicately-arching brow, traversed with veins as blue, moved languidly, but seeming as much from sorrow as with sickness. His hair, too, was fair and curling, such as Gervase had described it, when he used to sport, in joyous infancy, a free denizen under the very roof where he was now brought in sufferance! — and oh, how like a prisoner!

Betha could not articulate a word; but she hurried towards him, and took his passive hand. With that touch, feeling, as it were, the bond of one common parental source — the child, too, whose woes or death she had so often, in dis-

course with Gervase, shed a tear over!—the moment was too much for her; and sinking down into a chair not far from that he had quitted, she struggled for an instant or two; but the yearning heart would have way, and she wept aloud.

The boy stood gazing on her, but at a little distance. For she had dropped his hand in her first attempt to overcome an emotion, she dreaded, if seen, would heavily offend her father. But Geoffrey was too subtle a master of human nature to allow this, or any other ill-timed peculiarity of those he used as agents, to disconcert him. With a tranquil kind of dignity he drew towards her. "Betha," said he, "Benomi has now seen proof of what I promised him,—that his orphan state would find a compassionate mistress in my daughter. But this weak way of showing it must be checked, my child!—for it may seem to sanction that nervous sensibility in himself, which, though pardonable in your sex, in his—only meets pity from woman."

The tone of the last sentence did, in-

deed, check the labouring sighs of a pity swelling his daughter's bosom with an utterable sympathy, she felt the apparently unconscious object too well deserved; but she still held her handkerchief to her eyes, to conceal their yet flowing streams, and also the accusing expression her father might have found there: — that he was cruel in this reflection on the poor, regretful, parentless child, whom he himself had rendered so. Had she looked up, she would have seen, that the stern glance he had turned on the boy with this implied rebuke, had more than doubled its point, and that the young "Son of Sorrow" stood before him now gazing on the ground, with the aspect of a creature that neither could speak nor move.

Geoffrey then drew away the handkerchief from his daughter's eyes: the action alone stayed any other drops from starting there; but still she bent down their lids, in trembling apprehension. He looked steadfastly in her face. "Betha," said he, "remember my injunctions!"

He rose as he spoke — " I have much to settle with Mildred for your journey to-morrow; therefore, shall leave you for a while with this your new page, and by the time I return, I shall hope to find that you both understand the relative situations to which I introduce you!"

Betha was astonished at her father's proud demeanour to the child he knew to be his nephew; and also could not comprehend, that he meant any thing serious in the relative terms he had used; for they did not not agree with the characters in which he had hinted they were to travel together under the guardianship of Mildred. She bowed, however, to his parting injunction, though she did not speak. Neither did Benomi answer any thing; but he made the same recognition, that he had heard what was addressed to him.

Betha sate sadly meditating, with her yet agitated countenance looking downwards, till she heard her father close the door, and even turn the lock upon them. They were then alone — Who could then

withhold her from pouring her balm, of even a common fellow-creature's compassion, upon that young, helpless head! She raised her eyes, which again filled and overflowed, when, rising from her seat, she once more took the hand of the almost statue-like boy, who still stood where her last glance had met his; but now gazing fixedly on the floor. He started, and looked at her again with the same sort of undefining amazement in his eyes as when she first touched him. She now pressed his hand with the warm grasp of the inward anguish she was feeling on his account. All was in silence yet; but he felt the expression of that pressure on his young heart. Oh, so long unaccustomed to any breath of kindness! And this touch, even like that of the sacredly-gifted hand of the holy messenger in the wilderness, opened at once the sluices of that sealed-up bosom. He sunk at her feet, and clasping her gown in his little emaciated hands, buried his face there, bathing it with his long, but noiselessly flowing tears. Betha felt her own deep sympathy

with all that was then passing in his innocent breast — the sad cell of such early griefs; but that sympathy, more affectingly animated by the answering emotion of its object, timely checked in its excess from dread of her father returning, and finding her charge thus pouring out the sensibility he had reprimanded; but which, but for the settled woe in his countenance and this burst, she might otherwise have supposed was petrified, within that little still form, to marble.

Earnest then to soothe and cheer the poor child, whatever might be the occasion of the present immediate distress, now broken forth — for his period of separation from his parents had been too long ago to suppose any perpetuated feeling so very agitating — she, indeed, forgot that he was not aware of his near relationship to her, and folding her arms round him, she raised him, and touched his tear-wet forehead with her lips.

"Whatever be the present cause of these tears," said she — and oh, how ten-

derly! — "there is a Father above, comforts those who trust in Him!"

"I know it!" was his faltering reply, yet the voice was dove-like. "Did I not know it, I should not be alive now; for He alone has been my comforter, since I lost all this cruel world had left me."

These words, recalled Betha to a recollection, that she had a part from that world to act. Even she was commanded to add another privation to that forlorn one, by concealing from him, that it was his own kindred who was then holding him near her heart, and striving to bring some lasting consolation to his sad memories.

"Benomi," said she, seating him by her, "my father has told me, that we are to travel together to a sweetly-salubrious air in the west of England, for your health: we are to abide there in a beautifully-situated, very ancient house, I have never seen yet. Perhaps you remember its name, Arelby?"

"No!" was the boy's reply, who, on her uttering the name of Benomi, had withdrawn the hand she still held, after placing him beside her, and drew it across the yet twinkling drops on his eye-lash: "I remember few things now; but they are all I think about. Yet," he added, with a deep sigh, "you are kind!" — and he took her hand again. "President Baldry called you Betha: then your name is Elizabeth?" When he had asked this question, which was uttered in a very low voice, he dried his still dimming eyes with the end of the linen-band that hung from a falling collar of the same material, over the front of his grey serge-vest: he looked with a most profound melancholy in her countenance.

"Betha, simply, is my name," answered she, "President Baldry's only daughter. I have no brother; and glad should I be to be considered as a sister by you."

"Indeed!" returned he. "My sister?" — and he paused, and wrung the

hand he had taken, and pressed it fervently to his lips.

"My sweet young brother!" whispered she, gently smiling, "our first pledge of such kindred must not be thus sorrowful!"

"Oh, lady!" cried he, turning his eyes searchingly on her, "can you know the fate of such brotherhood? Alas! alas! I must have none on earth: but there is a place," and he smiled, "where I shall!—a kingdom of peace; and, as I never can meet any one in this world who dare love me as some did whom I loved, —but went to their peace, leaving me alone,—I shall be glad, indeed, when I lay down in my last sleep too; to wake where they are awake now, and never can be torn from me again; and President Baldry may not come, to chide me for thinking of them."

"But, Benomi," said she,—subduing in herself the rekindling emotions his words gave rise to, and wishing to dispel thoughts in him which, she conceived, some vague recognitions of his former

self were now disturbing his distempered mind with,—"we should not be ungrateful for present mercies. My father's are good injunctions;—to try to cherish hope, even in these times of many troubles. And surely, that I would be called a sister by thee, may be received as one little comfort." And again she smiled.

A faint colour passed over his pale cheek. "You are good!" returned he. "But did not President Baldry bring me to be his daughter's page? Not to abide with lackeys, indeed, but to lodge in her ante-chamber, and wait upon her commands in all things, save exposing myself in their duty by going beyond the walls of any habitation in which I may have to dwell with her!—These were Geoffrey Baldry's injunctions to me!—these were the hopes he taught me! He made me repeat them, to show that I understood them. And how can I address her I am to serve as a servant, by a name that might make me forget I am now the abject thing to which they have at last degraded me? It cannot be, lady."

"Poor child! poor child!" was Betha's involuntary ejaculation, who believed she now saw too evidently the wanderings of mind her father warned her of; and, more collectedly resuming her discourse with him, she strove to impress him with the idea, she could not but entertain herself, that her father's words of page and serving were merely playful terms, while introducing them to each other; he to be her faithful page, she to be his tender nurse, and Mildred to be the watchful guardian of both during their meditated journey.

The boy smiled mournfully, but shook his head. "Your graciousness to me," he answered, "would make me your willing servant to death; but to be compelled to fetch and carry for those who — but that is over — to one, at least, whose meek submission —— and, God of my father! I thank Thee for that!" — cried he, interrupting himself, with a countenance that shone with almost an angel's passing brightness, — then lowering his tone, and looking wistfully in her

face, he said, "Do not call me ungrateful; but Geoffrey Baldry must never hear my lips say sister to a daughter of his. But Betha, — I never heard ugly voices pronounce that name,—and it shall be Betha — dear Betha." And the child paused, and hung his head, and clasping his hands upon his breast, murmured the last adjuration as if he were talking to vacancy.

Betha's heart was riven in twain by this. "Call me what you will," cried she, "only let it remind you that I am your friend; that I would cherish you in sickness and sorrow, like my own blood — and that I will!" Then, dreading that she had, perhaps, just dropped the hint her father had enjoined her to refrain from, she hastily added — "But meanwhile, Benomi, you must never forget, that whatever hard discipline my revered parent may have deemed fit to lay on this delicate frame and mind, it has been thought necessary, to the strengthening of the whole, for the honourable duties hereafter of a good republican!"

The boy now looked on her with a face flushing crimson, and a fire blazing from his before soft eyes, that amazed her, while rising from his seat he exclaimed—"A republican! Geoffrey may kill me, but never make me that!" And he walked from her across the room, with a step and air of inward resolution, that gave to the stripling form of a sickly youth, the momentary semblance of brave and determined manhood.

Betha offered no rejoinder; for she felt that the son of Eustace de Matchelowe could have little associations in his mind to conciliate reverence for the makers of a republic, which had deprived him of all; and she silently reproached herself for so ill-judged a word, in a remonstrance she had intended to represent consolatory circumstances alone. He stopped at the recess of the only window the chamber contained, and stood before its bricked-up casements, as if he were gazing through its long-displaced means of vision; for the window was blocked up in like manner with those of the chapel, quite to the

traversing mullion under the floriated Gothic points; and there the shining of the moon through the painted glass yet filling those compartments, cast a sort of dim shadowy light down upon his head.

Betha watched him with growing uneasiness at what she had said, and was anxiously devising how she could best allay the troublous spirit she had so undesignedly roused in a bosom in which it had seemed so perfectly subdued, when he turned from the recess. His hands were again crossed on his breast as if he were pressing some cherished relic there; and his countenance was restored to its former sad serenity; but he did not advance to resume his seat by her, nor did he look towards her, but leaned his arm and his evidently aching head, against a pillar that flanked one of the covered arches in the room. His face appeared paler than before his flushing emotion. Betha saw that her last words had indeed inflicted a wound not easily to be healed; and with the generous haste of a contri-

tion where no real self-blame could be imputed, she came to him herself.

"I see I have given you pain," said she. "I ask not how; — but I feel as if the malediction of Him who bade no one *offend the least of his children who trusted in Him*, were now upon me." And, with a full tear dropping on the hand she took, she lifted that hand to her lips. He looked at her long and steadily before he answered her, but her hand, all that time, was clasped to his own bosom.

"You shall be my plighted sister," at last cried he, "though I call you so only when we are alone. For I must yet pray many nights and days, before I can quite obey the blessed Pardoner of some afflictions!"

While he was speaking, he seemed almost unconscious whether he were addressing her or talking in soliloquy. But ere she could reply in any way, the key of the sacristy door grated in its wards — for the passage walls in that part of the building were too thick to allow of any

warning being heard of approaching steps — and the moment after, she perceived the shadow of her father's figure advancing with a lamp in his hand into the inward archway from the closet door. At the same sound, on its very first creaking in the lock, Benomi had slowly turned from her side, and resumed his seat by the table.

When Geoffrey entered, he hardly observed that his daughter was standing apart from her intended charge: if he thought at all on the subject, it was, that most likely the melancholy taciturnity of the boy, had wearied even her compassionate nature, and that she was strolling about in very patience. He told her that Mildred was ready to receive her; and turning to Benomi, said, he should now be left to sleep, pointing at the same time to a high dark screen-work before one of the recesses, and adding, that behind it he would find a pallet, and other conveniences for his rest. The boy had risen, with a mild courtesy which seemed habitual to him, when addressed; but

Geoffrey, nothing affected by it, rapidly continued in a yet more authoritative tone, to enjoin his being up and prepared by day-break, to attend his young mistress and her venerable monitress with some degree of youthful alacrity, when summoned to their morning's setting forth.

Betha cast an imploring eye on her father, which, had he met it, was to beseech his not using such terms of offensive vassalage to an ear so sensitive, to a heart so sore. But Geoffrey did not look into the face of either; he merely took her hand, and placing it within his arm, turned her towards the door-way. But she could not part with the poor child thus, — her eye wandering over that desolate apartment, in his own birthright home, while she was going to one of the nicest comfort under the same roof! And leaning back from her father's arm — "Benomi!" said she, in a low, but, she trusted, so kind voice as would make some amends for the lofty tones of her father — "Good night!"

In looking round, she saw him standing just where he had bowed his mute acquiescence to Geoffrey's injunction; but his eye met her eloquent glance of pity, even of reverence, for the meek forbearance he showed; and he made a step forward, but recoiling again, he laid his hand on his young breast, and hastily articulated—"A blessing to thee, lady!"

CHAP. XVIII.

Betha began to conceive too just an apprehension of what might be her father's intended treatment of this unfortunate child, whatever were the motive, to venture any remark on the discomfort of the chamber in which he had been left, or on the homely garments in which he was dressed. They were, indeed, more like the common suit of a mechanic lad, than what might have been expected as provided by Geoffrey Baldry for the raiment of even the lowest kinsman bearing his name. But Betha felt — "He does not inherit that name; and a De Matchelowe must not now be recognised in this land any where." Yet she saw the elegance of the boy himself could not be hidden: the rearing of high birth was visible in every turn of his graceful carriage; and the delicate skin of his fair

throat only appeared the more eminently distinguishable, by the coarseness and less whiteness of the garment next it.

"Is it so roughly appareled, that the once-idolized child of the Lady Aphra re-enters the home of his fathers?" said Betha, inwardly, while turning from the apartment in which she left him; "and is it in so prison-like a chamber, he is to pillow his lonely and unheeded aching head? Where, where, is that mother's sheltering bosom?" But Betha remembered, with a second pang of deeper pity to the poor child, that she believed that young beloved one had found refuge from all pains and disquiets in his watery grave. To that mother, then, he was no more!

Geoffrey did not disturb his daughter's meditations, whatever they might be, till he brought her to the door of the room whence he had first taken her; and then telling her she would find Mildred there, ready to give her further details concerning their mode of travel, he named the hour of their setting out next morning, at which time, he said, he

would see her again; and, meanwhile, bade her good rest for the night.

On entering the apartment, Betha saw her monitress; but so busily employed giving directions to two of the superior female servants, respecting certain preparations, and how the household should be conducted during her absence, that Betha gladly seized so favourable an opportunity of leaving the room again, on a plausible excuse; and so readily seeking, unmissed, the deserted library, where she did not doubt the anxiously-watching heart of poor Gervase was still awaiting her. She therefore asked permission of her monitress to retire till all orders were given to these maidens; and added, she would then be found in her own chamber, to attend to what might be requisite for herself. Mildred nodded, and Betha vanished from the room.

Her light step as fleetly thridded the well-known though totally dark passages, to the old library; and while she was cautiously feeling for the bolt to open the door from the remote little lobby

that led to it, the recollection rushed sadly on her, that she was come, not to speak the joy she might convey to the faithful creature there, but to deceive him! What to say she knew not, only she was here; and to release him from the cruel suspense of longer expectation.

She pulled back the bolt, raised the latch, and opened the door; but the moment she did so, she felt the cold night breeze meet her; which showed that the opposite entrance, leading from the garden, had been improvidently left unclosed by the anxious watcher, after entering by that way; and fearing the effects of so chilling an air on so infirm a frame, she hastened the more hurryingly in, to relieve him from his hazardous station. On shutting the door of her entrance, she moved a step forward, and in a low voice addressed him, soothingly, by name: but no voice or sound answered her. Supposing he might have sunk wearied to sleep, she went on, feeling her way in the darkness, along the

edge of the great old table, which yet retained its former place; and by one side of which the relics of a once velvet-covered form stood, while at its head the knight's library chair, worm-eaten and damp-stained, remained also in its cushioned state. On it she thought it not unlikely the old man had seated himself, and there dropped unconsciously to repose. But when she reached it, her hand found nothing there but the mildewed clamminess of the decayed cushions; and when she touched the form, naught else was there either but the hard substance of the wood through the tattered covering. Could he then have fallen under it by some sudden illness, if not in sleep? for she knew him too well to doubt his abiding there till daybreak, had she remained away so long. Alarmed at the idea of illness, she stooped down and examined all beneath, continuing to whisper his name; but nothing answered, nothing was found of him. In recovering from her creeping position, near the head of the table, she chanced to put her

hand on the edge there, to assist her to rise, and, to her surprise, felt that she touched something cold, like iron. She instantly withdrew her hand, and sprung upon her feet; but on a moment's consideration, that nothing could possibly be there but one ofGervase's gardening tools, she put out her arms again towards the same spot on the table, and found she had then touched the hilt of one of two swords, on both of which her searching hands now rested. They lay close together, with their hilts towards the great chair. She started in amazement; for she had been in the room late that very afternoon, selecting some of its old books to take to her own chamber; and she knew there were no swords on that table then. It was also a place so deserted, that none other than herself ever entered it: for after its first locking up by Gervase, on the command of his, at that time new master, a strange notion had gone abroad in the village, that a little figure, (like one of the children in a picture of the Lady Aphra and her sons, which

hung over the mantel-piece,) had been once seen in that room by a working man chancing to look through the window one moon-light night, when he saw it sitting crying by itself, dressed in a white shroud; and frightful stories having been whispered in the family of what it might possibly be, no servant would ever go near the haunted spot. Betha had never imbibed any fear from this superstition; and when she learned from Gervase the store of valuable entertainment that dismal apartment contained, she asked him to give her up the key of its doors; and, from that time, she alone, she believed, had ever entered them, until this evening, when she had directed the old gardener to keep his watch there.

She was, therefore, in astonishment at the presence of these swords, wondering how they could have been brought there, and for what purpose. While she was yet standing in an appalled, almost vacuity of thought — for a sudden dread had struck her of some connection existing between the disappearance of Ger-

vase and the presence of these swords — she heard a sound, as of some cautiously-stealing step on the outside of the door, then ajar, to the garden. She was now afraid to repeat the name of the faithful creature, in case the present visitant should be one of the owners of the mysterious weapons, come to take them thence; and fearing to encounter such, whatever they might be — for she felt assured they could not belong to any of her own household, — she withdrew herself noiselessly as she could from the table, and out of the direct path of any who might enter at that door to approach it. The darkness of the room was impenetrable; nor did any ray of star or moonbeam come in at the egress; for a large abutment of the building, almost close to the door, obstructed all such minor lights. — Betha drew herself close within the bay of a window not far from the door, to allow any one to pass in without touching her. But this movement so near the entrance was overheard by the person hovering there, and she

thought her name was faintly uttered. — She listened breathlessly; and again, and a little nearer, the sound came. It was, indeed, the feeble, tremulous voice of Gervase, saying, "This way! Answer me, for the love of Heaven!"

Her response was indeed immediate, and in the same instant she approached the door, and laid her hand on his trembling arm.

"Can I speak with you?" said he. "But it must not be here."

"Then, dear old man, it cannot be any where," replied she. "Mildred will be awaiting me, perhaps even now: I dare not take you, at this late hour, within the house; and to-morrow morning, Gervase, I go on a long journey."

"Then, may Heaven be your guard!" returned he; "for there are swords to be drawn on the head of some one who bears you company, if the men I heard talking in this chamber half an hour ago, deem the occasion urgent."

Betha now grasped the arm she had touched in kindness on coming to the

door. She gasped for breath. "Gervase, I must hear what this is!"

"Not here, not here," returned he. "They will be back anon, and the lights they may bring with their master, would betray us then, even were we both thrust into the old book-case nook, where I hid myself, while they had no better guide than a dark lantern."

"What master? — Who are they? — Who would they strike with those swords?" — All these questions were asked in a rapid wild voice by Betha; but before the poor astounded old man could form a rational reply to any one of them, the broad flash of the lights he had predicted, struck on the opposite buttress, showing that the bearers of them were swiftly coming that way; and therefore in a direction from the wing of the offices usually inhabited by whatever servants her father brought, on any of his occasional visits to the manor-house.

"They come, and I am left in horror!" burst from her dismayed heart and lips. Gervase could only say, even in

the same moment, "Haste back, for the love of Heaven!" And, with the word, he again sunk down amongst the high weeds near the buttressed wall; and Betha, with a step to which a nameless terror lent wings and sight also in the darkness, was through the room, and along the passages, and even thrown half fainting into a chair in her own chamber, before she seemed to have almost drawn breath.

When she recovered herself a little, to think on what had passed, and on what it might portend, she felt some relief in the assurance, from the darkness still in her room, that her absence could not have been marked; for by the appearance of all round her, which she could discern by a sort of shadowy gleam through the windows, no person could have yet entered with the expectation of finding her there. Her night-lamp was not brought in, nor were the shutters closed; and the scattering rays of the moon, over which the thickening rack was driving, sometimes covering, then unveiling again, occasion-

ally shed a broken though bright light through the small leaded panes of the high casements. The evening had commenced serene, bright, and balmy; it had now become gusty, chill, and dreary, as if a heavy blighting influence hung in the air.

"Well might Gervase say," thought she, when she looked up to the changed aspect of the heavens, "that the shrouded vehicle both he and I saw this ill-starred night, boded no good to the inhabitants of this house! Oh, what could those swords mean? — and those direful threats? Poor child of Sir Eustace — what would thy innocent blood benefit any man? And, assuredly, if it would, my father is not that man to sanction shedding it! And again, if it were possible that it were not only adjudged so by the commonwealth, but acceded to by him, would he have chosen so unnatural a place to bid it be done in, as under this very roof? and to have it done even in the very sight of his own child! — for am I not to be the companion of this

poor victim's journey? O no! it cannot be! Gervase must have mistaken:—some one else may be going hence, over whom this cruel watch is to be set;—but it cannot be against any with me!"

Thus Betha reasoned with herself on the subject; but no reasoning could allay the fears which possessed her. And they were the more racking, because it was not practicable, without compromising the safety of her informer, to ask a question of her father, or of any one else, in seeking explanation of such extraordinary circumstances. But one thing was clear,—that, whatever Gervase had overheard, it had not imparted any thing to him which could betray to his knowledge, who had actually come in secret to the house; for if it had, she knew that the name of Henry de Matchelowe, would have been the first words uttered by him to her on their meeting, after a discourse threatening to his life.

How long Betha mused thus she could form no guess, for she lay back in her chair, with her eyes closed, and her

thoughts in a chaos whirl; stopping at intervals to mingle a wild yet devoted prayer with their frightful images, for the maintenance of her father's purity of soul through the dark mazes of such grievous times. Could there be stability expected in any condition, she bethought her, where the life of innocence was to be taken to cement it? Were it to happen so now! But again she exclaimed, —"It cannot be; and I am parricidally deeming it possible, that any state sophistry could induce my father to give an order to bloody men against his own kindred — and that an unoffending infant!"

In the midst of this horrid trance of vague suspicions, she was roused to take part in the immediate scene around her; or, rather, to prepare for that rest in bed, she felt so necessary to at all fit her for the proceedings of the morning, by the voice of Mildred entering her apartment. The good dame expressed wonder at finding her pupil seated thus abstractedly alone, and without a light, when so much

was to be thought on for so hasty a journey. But it was only to the servants she said this; for her own knowledge of who was to be their charge, sufficiently accounted to her for the evident bewilderment in the looks of her pupil, from the time her father had revealed it to her. Mildred saw she was exhausted in soul and body; and, without harassing her with any remark, either on herself or on what President Geoffrey had communicated, she assisted to undress her; and, seeing her laid in quiet for repose, the kind dame drew the curtains, and gently quitting the room, stupor, rather than sleep, soon sealed the weary eyelids of Betha.

CHAP. XIX.

THE morning broke with torrents of rain: nevertheless the astonished servants of Matchelowe Court saw the travelling coach of their master appear at the great door of the house, with six horses attached to it, all ready to commence the projected journey in the face of so inclement a day. The young lady's versatile health had been the plea given out the night before, for her temporary departure to the west of England, there to abide in her father's yet-unvisited domain of Arelby, because of its mild air, until the approaching winter should be past; therefore the wonder was proportionate, when these simple-minded domestics became convinced, by the actual arrival of the completely-equipped vehicle, that their kind young mistress was not only going from them for so many months, but

would be exposed in her journey to the bad roads, and other casualties incidental from tempestuous weather. But no remark durst ever be made on an order of President Baldry's; and they quietly stood by, in respectful waiting, the coming forth of the travelling party.

Wretched, however, as the morning was, Gervase and his son Hugh were the first living creatures discerned in the dim and showery twilight of the dawn, crossing the graveled terraces towards the front of the mansion, whence it was known the travellers were to proceed.—The father and son stationed themselves just within the arch of the large gothic porch of the door, and there Hugh took off the dripping cloak with which he had sheltered his aged parent from the pouring clouds, and laid it in a corner. There being stone benches round the interior of the porch, on one of those the faithful pair rested themselves during their yet hour of watching. At last, as has been said, the carriage drove up; and when the great door opened its iron-studded

folds, and the servants of the house came forward with the various articles they were to put within the vehicle, Gervase, with a filling heart, at these signs of what that carriage was indeed to take from him — the only successor to the love he bad borne the former family, all gone too — withdrew further into the recess of the arch. But on Mildred's appearing, and casting round a look of scrutiny, till she fixed it with a scowl, Gervase thought, on him, — his belief of her devotedness to all the President might devise, and the consciousness of what he had overheard the preceding night, and of his intent to put a paper, with some ill-penned though true account of what it threatened, into the hand of her charge if possible that morning, — so alarmed him by that look, that, raising himself by his old trusty staff, he retreated, followed by his son, from the porch, into the shadow of its pillared arch without. He had hardly arrived there when two military mounted men, by whose voices he distinguished them to be those

he had heard in the library, came on, curvetting their rough-coated but charger-like horses past him, splashing over him the pools collected in the hollows of the broken causeway; for from its being the grand carriage-road between the great gates of the mansion, it had seldom been used since the felling down of the main avenues; and the injuries done then, were never after repaired. Gervase could have groaned at the sight of these men; for, independent of their dark words in that dismal chamber, he remembered ruffians of similar aspects, who had flitted about the roads to the house, the very evening that President Baldry took away the Lady Aphra and her child; and also that he had seen such more than once enter that same old library by the garden way, to the President, when he closeted himself there alone, examining the papers to be burned. While Gervase, with a failing heart, was thus contemplating these men, one of them with a loud laugh dismounted, and giving the bridle of his horse to his com-

panion, went into the house by a small little-frequented door, which the old man knew led, by a short circuit, to his worship's private apartments.

Much time did not now elapse before Betha herself appeared, with her thoughts full of Gervase's broken information, and the portentous weapons too well corroborating it; yet she had no expectation of seeing him that inclement morning, having no idea of his venturing there to make any addition to his vaguely-alarming tale. And when her father led her to the front of the porch, where she stopped a few seconds while he went forward to place Mildred in the carriage, — all bewildered with the mist of circumstances into which her judgment, nay, her feelings, of duty seemed in so many ways involved, she stood gazing forward as on vacancy, when her eye suddenly caught a glimpse of the armed man and his military harnessed steed, who was holding the reins of the other, his companion not being returned. The sight of that man was as an instant verification of all Gervase had implied.

His open cloak showed a cuirassed vest, and pistols in his belt, also the dark lantern appended there, the usual adjunct, in those times of civil discord, to the hostilely-accoutred side of a volunteer *guerilla* of the commonwealth. But, above all, she discerned a huge iron-pommeled sword, which she had no hesitation in recognising to be one of those her hand had touched; and the rugged countenance of the owner seemed to say, he was ready to put it to any use to which his employer might direct him. Her own face told her thoughts to poor old Gervase, who, in the same moment, drew towards her, and with rain and tears flowing together down his unbonneted grey head, with speechless haste laid down his little basket of choice fruit at her feet; which he had made Hugh bring as their farewell offering, and also the better to excuse his coming so near her, as he must attempt to pass the scrap of indeed still indistinct information into her hand. On seeing him, and his almost kneeling position on the wet earth by her side,

her kindness prompted the putting forth her hand to raise him, and give him one assuring pressure by it, of her remembrance of all his fidelities, till they should meet again. He took it tremblingly, eagerly; and while his aged lips touched it, he slipped his written piece of paper into it. This latter act, for on feeling the paper she surmised what it was, filled her with dismay: for should any person have observed him, and her father demand the paper in consequence, she believed the old man would be lost; and she knew not how direfully the precarious fate of her young cousin might be precipitated by such a discovery. Apprehension, therefore, prevented her drawing back her hand, so as to allow her to secure its deposit anywhere about her person: but crumpling it together for concealment within her grasp, her very haste caused her agitated fingers to drop it; and that, just as her father, turning from the carriage towards her, had noticed, with an evident start of displea-

sure, the proximity of the De Matchelowe old retainer to her side. — In the same instant, too, he observed Hugh, the gardener's son, throw himself forward before her feet likewise; a double expression, by these two servants of the former possessor, of their being so peculiarly in her favour, that much offended Geoffrey; and particularly under the existing circumstances, feeling certain suspicions of his daughter's prudence, he hurried sternly towards her, asking her, "What those people were doing there? who, as garden labourers, could have no business to bring them in her way at all!"

Betha's confusion was so great she could not answer; but Gervase did: — "Though an humble labourer, I am pouring out my last blessing on the head of the niece of my beloved master — the poor man's mite in heaven's treasury! And a faithful servant's prayer, surely cannot be a dis-reverence of your Honour's daughter!"

Geoffrey pushed aside the basket of

fruit with his foot, just as Hugh, having recovered the slip of paper, had scrambled up from his knee; and, as if abashed at the rebuke, retreated behind the other servants. "Gervase," replied the President with increased severity, looking after the gardener's son, "you grow more officious than wise; and you appear to forget the duty you owe your present master, in making dangerous references to persons, whom, it being the justice of the commonwealth never to remember without seeking to punish, it has been my lenient commands to have forgotten entirely within any domain of mine; therefore, look to it, old man, for other sakes than your own."

While he was speaking, Betha almost lost the power of supporting herself, so great was her astonishment at this implied surveillance over the actions of the poor faithful creature; and the warning threat at the end of the reprimand, seemed to show too clearly a possible danger to the intended young partner of her travel, corresponding with the alarm

already excited in her mind by the vague information of Gervase, and her own ready fears of what might be the purposes of those two fearfully armed attendants. For while standing thus trembling before her father, she observed the mail-clad owner of the second horse issue from what was still called the sacristry-portal, (though any known entrance to that chamber itself had long been deemed a thing out of question), and by his side walked the slight stripling form of Benomi; which, though closely wrapped in a hooded cloak, she could not but recognise immediately. He and his guide advanced swiftly towards the porch, to which the finger of Geoffrey beckoned them; and in the haste of passing quickly in, from the downward pour of the plunging rain from the eves, Benomi ran against the feeble frame of Gervase, then turning silent and heart-stricken from the spot; but the young arm caught the staggering old man he had thrown from his tottering poise: and the gentle boy as instantly exclaimed, "Pardon me

this unintentional violence." — "I do, young sir! and from my heart," answered the old man, who would gladly have added, "whoever you may be, who speaks so kindly in this land of proud manhood to age and helplessness."

But he did not venture that offensive remark in the hearing of his haughty master; neither did it occur to him to think whose youthful and closely-concealed form that might be which had spoken such courteous words to him in so rude a circle; nor who it could be whom Geoffrey ordered the next moment, with a sternness like that shown to himself — "To hold up his young mistress's cloak as she stepped into the coach, and then take his place of waiting opposite to her." Betha had not dared to do more than cast a kindly, but distressed glance on Gervase, as he turned from the step of the porch. Her father then put her into the carriage; and Benomi, in strict wordless-obedience, did all he was commanded. The old man, meanwhile, stood aloof under the drip-

ping branches of a cherished yew-tree that still clung to its ancient roots near the porch, and saw the page-boy "take his place of waiting," on the vacant seat of the carriage, opposite to Dame Mildred and the pale and almost death-like Betha. The carriage drove abruptly off, and the horsemen followed. The white hand of Betha was seen for a monent, in the rapid whirl round, waving its adieu to the affectionate domestics she left behind; and a low murmur of "God bless her!" passed from every lip. Whether the silent, uncompanioned master of the whole re-entered the house, or mounted his fine steed, also brought out prancing from the court-yard, Gervase knew not: he looked no more, not even after the rolling vehicle, but turned his feeble steps away; for the last glance of the pale Betha was as a lone spark of light left on his soul.

But in the passing sweep of the starting carriage, he had seen more than her dove-like hand; he had seen the face of the boy opposite to her. And revolving

days and nights did not lessen the vivid impression of that young countenance, which a gust of wind for a moment revealed on his eyes and heart: it was as if a seraph-face had looked out from its cloud, and straight was gone again. No such page, he knew, was amongst the youth of Matchelowe or its vicinity; no such page (for it was a page that Geoffrey called him!) Gervase believed was likely to be found amongst the bold-visaged sons of the President's retainers any where. Whence, then, could he have been brought? Who could he be? For his sweet voice, and his gentle apology, were as full on the old man's heart as the glimpse of his countenance.

Thus did he muse and ponder, in his way back to rejoin Hugh in their then doubly desolated cottage; yet blessing Heaven for his son's timely recovering the paper from the ground, which, had Geoffrey seized it, might have proved the ruin of all it meant to serve: but she, for whom he had ventured so dangerous a warning, had been gone many miles on her journey

before it occurred to him, and with a strange bewilderment of thought for the wherefore — that it might be possible the young page, so unlike a page in aspect, was "the *malignant* companion with the Lady Betha," against whose life those two men of raven names, as well as visages, had their iron-warrant in their belts: — he had heard them name each other, in their dark meeting over-night, Felton and Tyrrell; both spurious offspring, their history might have told him, of a race which time had made notorious for iniquity; and the present sons appeared to Gervase, from what he recalled of their haviours aforetime (for he did not doubt they were the same men he had seen visiting the place on former mischiefs), to be as capable of the blackest perpetrations as any of their sires.— And yet who could the boy be whose duty to his young mistress must have so cruel a penalty held over its forfeiture? "No, no," cried Gervase to himself, "such a punishment cannot be for any page offence merely! Alas, he must be

some noble child! for the men called the devoted companion a *malignant;* and Cromwell, perhaps, may have sent him a poor fatherless prisoner, from some of the sacked fine places in the north, for President Geoffrey to get rid of, any how, if he cannot make a serving-man of him; for now the world is upside down!"

Oh! had the suspicion flashed on him, that it might be the son of his beloved master, he had touched in that moment of their abrupt meeting and separating again — that it was he over whom those swords hung as by a hair—his aged hands would have dug up the earth under his feet, to have covered his head with dust and ashes, because of his soul's anguish in not having recognised, in that precious instant, the darling infant which had so often nestled in his arms; and, in one dying prayer to heaven, have blessed him in the ears of all men, ere he saw him, as it were, fettered like a lamb, and consigned to the wardship of wolves. But the hand which "tempers the wind to the shorn lamb" spared the affec-

tionate old man such a vision of apprehensions; and the soothing power of the same Providence, which sheds its balm of hope or resignation wherever sought, gradually cast the softening twilight of man's trust in the dawn to come, on the setting day of the venerable Gervase.

CHAP. XX.

MEANWHILE the travellers sped on.—The first day passed away, and a second, and a third, and even a fourth, and the weather continued changeful; sometimes the sun shining out, lit up every object; sometimes gloom overshadowed hill and valley; and, at other times, sheets of falling showers again and again obscured the landscape. But Betha's soul might be called nature's mirror; or rather, her sweetly-attuned instrument, from which each different touch brought most eloquent music. And now, though she had left her home with an eye sealed from every thing, while her heart was bound up in the mysterious fear that night had awakened, she began to see and breathe the wholesome world again, since she found all these successive days and nights had passed on without other sign

of intended harm to her young kinsman than the grim visages of their two male attendants. And, as they in fact looked as sternly on herself, as on the unconscious boy she had dreaded was to become their victim, she began to hope that Gervase had been mistaken in the object, or even in the matter of those men's implied dark service; and to again believe in the certainty of her father's declared "leniency" in behalf of him for whose safety she had conceived so overwhelming a panic.

With these eagerly-greeted impressions, Betha turned, lightened at heart, to the varying aspects of the luxuriant and picturesque country through which they daily travelled. She gazed from window to window of the carriage, and the tongue of a pure taste for the first time beholding nature's wondrous beauties, or her milder features of Arcadian loveliness beyond the dismantled limits of Matchelowe Court, was poetry itself in her bursts of admiring enthusiasm. She called on Benomi to share the delight

with which she contemplated the far-spread plains, glowing with yellow corn-fields, and orchards pendant with fruits of every blooming ripeness. The russet villages, set in their little garden-plots, with their flower arbours and bee-hived mossy banks; the pretty maidens tenting the hay, or driving the kine afield for milking; — all brought smiles of sympathetic gladsomeness upon her kindling cheek; and Benomi smiled too, but he sighed with every smile, and seldom answered more than by a word of meek assent any of her exhilarated remarks on the cheerful scene.

However, at last, not even the heavy veil of his early sorrows, casting over his young mind a perpetual shadow of evil days past and to come, could quite withstand the melting influence of her sweet persuasiveness. That joy, the joy of gratitude to a beneficent Creator, must be present in every heart while contemplating his abundant bounty in these visible gifts of His hands. Such discourse was balm to the inward bleeding of the wound

within him; and, though the brightest scenes around, could not repair his own utter desolation, yet they were regarded gratefully by that young and generous bosom, when brought to see that all he might have mourned as fellow-sufferers, had not been made to drink the cup of bitterness, as he had done — up to the very dregs.

In this way, from "rosy morn to golden eve," Betha beguiled him from his usual sad pensiveness, to take an interest in the various employments exhibited in rural life, while their road lay through the midland counties of harvest and pasturage. And when it turned westward into the more romantic districts of bolder outline, she attracted his notice, and lured his hitherto unwinged thoughts to yet more excursive observations, even as a parent-bird would stimulate her tender young; or exciting his crushed imagination to the mind's redoubling enjoyments in what he saw, as her own hands would have gathered up the tendrils of some youthful vine,

trampled in the earth on which the cruel blast had cast it, and having raised them, spread them to the cheering sun; — so she drew the dejected child almost from himself, to follow her heavenward fancy over the sublimer objects of less bounded nature. The graceful contour of its waving hills; and then their grand acclivities, and far-withdrawing vales; its wooded heights; its noble rivers; and even its murmuring streamlets, lost in thick umbrage, or sparkling gaily in the forest glades; — to all these her animated, deeply-felt discourse gave a moving spirit. The shades of poesy were there; the nymph of the fountain, or the wandering fairy of the grove: — "Or," said she, "in woods and wilds like these, the hovering seraphs from a purer world have visited the solitary pilgrim's path, and touched his lips with waters, that he thirst no more!"

Benomi smiled, and smiled again, when she talked thus; and his heaven-tinged eye sought hers, as if it held the kindly seraph she spoke of. But when the road

lay near or through any town, the boy seemed to shrink inward again: his eye faded of its lustre, his cheek lost its transitory brightness, and he sunk at once into his usual pale languor. Indeed, it appeared to Betha, that in this instance her father had paid a tender attention to his nephew's perhaps distempered sensibility, in this evident aversion to even the sight of the very bustling habitations of men; for during the whole of the journey, she remarked, that Mildred punctually dropped the blinds of the carriage when entering a town; and when they alighted at the inns, care was previously taken to muffle them so closely up, that no observation could be made of their persons; and when within the house, none of the party ever passed from the suite of rooms engaged for their noon or night's rest; and all who waited on them, kept as profound a silence as if they were mutes, or attending upon the dumb. Therefore, Betha soon found that she could derive no answer to any questions about the places she came to,

further than their names, and those were briefly told to her by her monitress; who, since the commencement of this journey, had become more than usually reserved, and, perhaps, never spoke to the new trust imposed on her care but by a monosyllable, and with an austerely-averted look. Betha's pleading could not soften this antipathy to one of patrician race, so deep in the breast of the republican dame; and she learnt from her, though in private, that President Geoffrey, for the just reason of holding this dangerous kinsman's asylum with him a secret impossible to be discovered, had interdicted all communication between her party and the rest of the world.

Hence Betha was not only denied the slightest converse with the country folk on the road, or with the people at the inns, had she wished it, but forbidden to walk out, or even look from the windows, to see the venerable buildings in any of the ancient cities of good old England, in which they halted, and for which history had imparted a sort of filial reverence

in her youthful mind. And that her young companion should acquiesce, not merely unrepiningly, but with a feeling of shelter in all these precautions, she was not surprised; nay, as has been said, she saw that such would have been his own mood, had it not been the command of her father. But it did appear something almost inexplicable to her, that whenever, during her travelling conversations with him, she referred to any historical record, or tradition connected with the places through which they were passing, his countenance clouded, and the interest with which he was viewing outward objects ceased.

"Poor child!" thought she, "how frightfully marked must be the sense of thy early misfortunes, to have robbed thee thus of even a blameless pleasure in the recollection of circumstances in which it is probable thine own noble ancestors shone! But now that their descendants are no more allowed to be rich and great in this land, even memory of what they were seems like another species of afflic-

tion to thee!" When Betha had observed this more than once, to be assured that she drew a right inference, she refrained altogether from the sort of subjects likely to conjure up the corresponding pain and consequent aversion, and gave her remarks more wholly to the voice of nature in earth and sky.

Every mode of speed, too, consistent with the style of travelling in those times, was adopted by the two able pioneers, their vigilant escort; one horseman always riding forward to prepare horses for their advance, or to survey the road, and turn them out of it, should any thing present itself that might be inconvenient. The other, with like fidelity, maintained a regular pace equal with the carriage, though generally at a sufficient distance not to incommode those within with too frequent views of his wild and rugged aspect. Both the men paid a sullen kind of respect to Mildred, on alighting and setting forth, during their travelling; and both affected, at least, to treat Betha and the boy with similar rough neglect of

either of them, except as things appending to the venerable commonwealth dame. Betha remembered her father having told her at parting, that while on the journey she must not be surprised to hear herself addressed by Mildred as her niece; for it was necessary for the security of her charge through so many counties where suspicions of malignant spies were afloat, that the strictest incognito should be kept by all parties. Also, she was enjoined to prepare herself to comply in every respect with the dispositions for speed or disguise, which Felton and Tyrrell might at any time deem requisite.

"You must not fear their war-hacked visors," said he, "when you see them. They are sound men at heart, brave and resolute; — and in these times, good weapons must give outward warning of their proof. Their stern exterior, before this, has been their master's best friend. — So trust to them, Betha! — for they know you are my daughter, though they must comport themselves as if you were

no better than Dame Woolnoth's niece." Betha had then ventured to enquire,— "Do they know the poor invalid to be your nephew?" Geoffrey answered— "They know he is their charge, and that is sufficient for them and for you. They know his name is Benomi; and, if you have not more folly in your pity, than prudence in your regard for the boy, you will not seek to enlighten any human being further on the subject: therefore, cease all questions about him."

This had silenced Betha then; and now seeing nothing worse than their rugged miens in these men, she tried to obey her father in yielding perfect confidence to their being indeed libelled by their looks, and hence went securely forward. But towards the evening of the sixth day of the journey, Tyrrell, who always took the lead as inspector of the way, galloped suddenly back, and met the carriage, which had just turned off the Worcester road into the more northern one, that led to the extremity of the shire where Castle Arelby lay. He

did not come up to the vehicle; but in obedience to a motion of his hand for it to stop, the postillions checked their horses, while he went to Felton, and both spoke together in low voices, for a few minutes. Felton then rode forward, down a sort of cross-country path, in a south-western direction, and Tyrrell briefly told the postillions to follow their leader, and he would bring up the rear.

"How strange!" cried Betha, while the carriage immediately wheeled round, and drove rapidly into the newly-appointed road. "Surely, dame, that cannot be the way to Arelby?" Mildred, without even looking out, merely answered,—"Tyrrell knows what he is about, I doubt not; so you must not expect, my child, that I shall trouble him with questions."

Consequently, no more was said, while the carriage went floundering on, between two high hedges that precluded any view, and over a very bad road, apparently only travelled by the roughest order of carts, the ruts were so enormous.

At the end of a drive of about half an hour, they came to a small hamlet scattered over a marshy common, where it was found necessary that the party must alight to allow the repair of a wheel which had suffered in the lane. There was a pretty cottage-like cider-house, which received the travellers, and they had just taken their seats near the little window of the parlour, all exceedingly fatigued by the jolting of the carriage, when Tyrrell, followed by Felton, opened the room door, and stood in the threshold. The former, with a more than usual severity of aspect, merely said — "Mistress Woolnoth, a word with you." And she instantly rose, and quitted the room to him. But Felton entered, and, shutting the door after him, continued to walk backwards and forwards, with a cloudily englooming countenance, as if some gathering thought in every pace deepened the dark sullenness of his meditations. He never spoke, nor seemed to take any other notice of the two inmates of the apartment, than a sentinel

might be supposed to do of his prisoners; now and then glancing at them with a look that seemed capable of searing up the tender eye it passed over. But that eye was not Benomi's. When the man entered, the poor boy immediately withdrew himself farther into the corner, near which the wooden stools on which he and Betha sate were placed. Betha observed Felton with a growing uneasiness; for one of the frightful swords was by his side, and his hand (though it was his left) rested on its iron pommel while he strode heavily over the floor. She remarked also, that when he came into the room, a sudden hectic rose on the lily-transparency of Benomi's cheek, and that he never raised his eyes from the ground during the sound of those unwelcome footsteps.

In about ten minutes after her departure, Mildred re-appeared, and Felton vacated the apartment with as little ceremony as he had taken possession. Her countenance, however, seemed greatly disturbed, her actions also were hurried,

and her communications, though dealt as cautiously scant as before, were given in a much less composed style of language. Betha's eyes were full of anxious demands, to know whether any thing extraordinary had happened. But Mildred would not look a reply of any kind, and all she said was — "Tyrrell says, we must take rest ere we proceed to Arelby, which is still many miles distant; and before sunset this evening, he promises to bring us safe to Upton, a strong little town, where he knows some good people; and we shall abide there till all be well again."

"Why, who is ill?" enquired Betha, perceiving there was something under this account her monitress was seeking to disguise, and therefore it excited her alarm. Mildred reddened. "I may be ill," returned she, "or that boy of evil-omen, he looks ill enough. At any rate, Betha, you do ill to question thus the acts of your father's servants."

Betha could not but bow her head to this, yet her heart turned only the more

commiserately on her young cousin, who still sate looking down, saying not a word, and his colour, indeed, changing repeatedly. She hardly knew what she felt herself while regarding him thus meek, and stricken by harsh words, even in the moment of their alleging his need of a particular care; but she certainly was convinced that Mildred would not have used such terms, had she meant what she pretended, that the proposed halt was for the sake of salutary rest for that poor child; and moved with a touch of resentment against her, as well as with a powerful feeling towards him, she took his hand, and tenderly asked — "Are you then so very unwell, Benomi?" "I am any thing — or nothing — in this world!" said he; and the sigh that burst from his heart was so heavy, so appealing to hers who put the question, that, seeing nothing but his forlorn state, she threw her arms round his neck, and pressing him to her bosom, — "Nay, nay; let what will come, thou shalt always be dear to me!"

"Betha!" cried her monitress, "remember whose daughter you are! Pity as Christian charity bids; but do not debase yourself, and insult your father's principles."

"Dame," replied she, unclasping the child, and looking at her for a moment in aghast astonishment — then solemnly proceeded — "my conscience teaches, that when a Christian woman can debase herself by soothing the breaking heart of a helpless orphan, then will religion dishonour the name it bears, and I dishonour my father."

Mildred stood transfixed. She had never before heard a word of reproach to her from that gentle voice; she could never have believed it possible to have seen such an expression of offended, holy dignity in any human face; she stood in an unanswering wonder of thought.

"Oh, Betha!" cried Benomi, starting from his seat, "do not displease the dame for my sake. I know you pity all who suffer, and God will bless you for it! Leave me, then, to Him, and He will

heal my broken heart;—for I cannot live, and break the peace of one who has been so kind to me!"

"Mildred, Mildred!" rejoined Betha, turning her eyes from him, full of a supplicating spirit, upon her monitress: when, observing the silent confusion with which the dame was struggling, she said no more, but respectfully took her hand, and pressed it to her breast.

"I understand what you would say," at last returned the venerable woman; "but you do wrong, Betha, to urge certain questions; you do wrong in showing personal tenderness to that child, which must contradict the character in which his worship has placed him here for his safety—that of your servant; and he must be conducted as such where we are going to; or—I repeat it to both of you—the falling of the millstone be on your own heads!"

Betha felt all the inward dissatisfaction of a mind that has once imbibed a train of disastrous suspicions, and would fain have asked, whither they were going? or, rather, why they were going to Upton

at all, instead of straight onward to Arelby? for the plea of illness amongst them had been sufficiently set aside. But she felt that she dared not proceed any further in attempting to allay her awakening disquiets respecting the real purposes of this journey, since she found that every trial towards that object only increased her difficulties; and that the hitherto true tongue of her revered monitress had been brought to imply what was not a truth in the strange concealment, was, perhaps, not the least formidable ground of her excited alarm. Thus, then, resigned to say no more, she silently heard Felton call out from the house-door, that the carriage was ready for "the mistress." She and Benomi followed Mildred from the room to the vehicle, and all entered it without speaking.

When in, as if by tacit consent, they took a place as widely separated from one another as they could well do in so confined a space. Betha, however, began to hope, that it was indeed care of her

young kinsman's safety which had dictated the offensive character of a menial, being put upon him; and that something of the same principle, more than her monitress's relentless antipathy against all of the cavalier race, might have prompted the excessive severity of her countenance towards him. Such precautions might certainly be prudent before strangers; and considering within herself how to preserve that cherishing attention to him, which his early sufferings of mind and heart seemed to demand every moment, with the expedient reserve her monitress had pressed upon her in such wounding terms, she gave a first lesson to herself, by not making any remark to Benomi, when he now placed himself on the seat opposite to the dame, rather than taking his wonted situation, where his languid eyes so constantly met the cheering fellowship of hers. Mildred and Betha sat as pent into their respective corners as they could put themselves,—Betha from an insurmountable repugnance to the unqualified manner in which the necessary caution had

been enforced on her in the presence of the helpless object of it; for love or reverence to any particular person, happily for human nature in general, cannot repel the disgust that will damp the brightest flames of affection, if that person grossly offends the moral principle. Betha had forgiven the pain such offence had afflicted her with, from her monitress; but she had not forgotten the unsparing harshness it had displayed; and, unconscious of her inward distaste being thus shown, she wrapped herself close in her cloak, as if from the cold. Mildred was conscious, though in a different way, and her folding mantle, too, was her sanctuary. The evening, indeed, was chill, for it began to drizzle rain; and by the time the carriage passed over the old creaking timbers of Upton bridge, which crossed the Severn there, the sky was become darkened with clouds, and a bleak wind blew whistling dank and drearily round them.

Tyrrell had ridden forward this time; and on its entering the gate of the town,

he met the carriage, and preceded it to the quarters he had engaged for the party — the house of a goldsmith, a kinsman of his own, a stanch round-head, and who happened to be chief magistrate of the place. In consequence of several very promising persuasions, imparted by his ready-handed relative, who drew no niggard stores from his employer's purse, the goldsmith was sufficiently alert in preparing his hospitalities for his anticipated visitants.

His dwelling was a large house, with a shop in front, pointing to the principal street; but it possessed the convenience of a back way, by crossing the great church-yard of the town; and thence Tyrrell brought his party, having caused them to alight at the cemetery gate, and enter their lodging by a wicket between the abode of the dead and the garden of the goldsmith. That worthy magistrate received his guests, rather than welcomed them; the fact being, that he was a thorough-paced leveller every where, except in his shop, and there he kept up

the old regime prices with true exclusive pertinacity. He led his company through his kitchen, and some other passages as little customary to be common paths, without any apology; and in pointing to the apartment selected for Mistress Woolnoth, and her niece, and serving-boy, he told her, "she would find all he thought needful for weary travellers. But if she craved aught else, she must knock her foot on the floor of the chamber where she sate; for the room was under it, where he and his kinsman, and Master Felton, would be sitting in discourse; — and he would send up to know her wants, as he understood the waiting-lad she brought was too puny for any present service."

The apartment to which he conducted them proved what he described, a single chamber on the first floor up the stairs. It was spacious; and, besides a plenteously-provided board in one part, spread for their refreshment, there appeared two beds in opposite corners, prepared for Mistress Woolnoth and her

niece; and a closet within the room showed a mattress on the floor for the serving-boy. It was a humble couch indeed, covered with a coarse rug; but it seemed clean, and Betha was glad to bring him to rest any where; for though he had attempted to smother the thronging sighs which were struggling from his bosom the whole of the latter part of their silent drive, yet she had heard them, and they had all been felt in the depths of her heart; for she could not but often think, that their still voice would be heard in heaven against those who had taken possession of his father's inheritance. "O!" thought she, "though it were forfeited, would that my father had never suffered the transfer to him! for, if he does not, I, his child, assuredly feel it like a leprous garment cleaving to my flesh wherever I go!" Under these impressions, she was the first to hail the sight of a wholesome nook of repose for their young companion; and she did it the more sincerely, from finding the

little cell within the barrier of her own chamber.

"This is, indeed, all comfortable," cried she, with that inward bound of heart to heart participating enjoyment, which belongs alone to providence's grateful children; and putting her arms round Mildred, she softly added, "give me the kiss of peace, my dearest monitress, else my pillow will yet be a hard one!"

"My precious child," replied the dame, bestowing the caress she asked, "the sun did not go down on my displeasure to thee! Bless thee in thy deed, whatever it be!"

When Mildred uttered this, Benomi smiled, and he felt a flutter in his breast of joy. He started at the strange sensation; for how long ago had been the time, young as he was, in which he had known that pulse before! Yet it was now joy,—a ray of light on his soul, though all were clouds around it;—the joy of seeing his only earthly friend thus reconciled to the maternal bosom she had offended

for his sake. —And the smile had not left his sweet face, when Betha turned to bid him good night, and close his closet door upon him. It was indeed a halcyon look, — the silver wings of the bird of promise on the subsiding troubled sea! and Betha did not lose the impression; her kindling countenance answered his; and with mutual gentle, low-breathed prayers, they parted for the night.

Mildred, wearied in mind and body, soon found repose. And Betha rested too, in the soothing stillness of that hour of slumber to all else around.

CHAP. XXI.

All was quiet in the town: business and pleasure were alike sunk to sleep. Not excepting the little garrison; which maintained its demonstrations of defence, in similar manner with several other places of the neighbourhood, where a foe was not really expected to draw a shot: when its companies for the night had planted their sentinels along the fortifications of the town, the main-body of the civic warriors themselves, mostly the enrolled tradesmen, picqueted their arms, and retired to their own beds in their own houses: thus leaving the good town of Upton to the "all's well!" of a scanty train of half-military watchmen, more used to wake or sleep at their own convenience, than to attempt either at the command of others.

But there was a military watch of a different description not far distant. A wild common, flanked by a scrambling gipsy-kind of wood, lay westward of the town, nearly two miles from its out-works in that quarter; and behind that wood, or rather just within its extremest border, protected by the screening trees, and on a tolerably clear piece of ground, extended the bivouac of about three hundred men, mostly musqueteers, well-appointed, resolute of heart, all ready to wake, sleep, or die, for the cause they had taken in hand. Some were veterans of former times, others were moved to their first arms then, by the zeal which collected them together—Colonel Massey of Herefordshire, being their rallying leader, and who had been excited to the prompt act by communication from his kinsman the famous General Massey, on his setting forth in vanguard of his young monarch, from over the Scottish borders into the great road of England.

By an ill-considered counsel, Charles had turned his retreat from the last suc-

cess of Cromwell, rather to meet the invitation of certain professing friends in the north-eastern counties of England, than to fall back on the impregnable fastnesses of the Gaelic highlands. But General Massey, the most sagacious adviser of the misled monarch, happily discovered the snare that awaited him in Northumberland, even before he and his deceived counsellors had entered that proposed course of their march. To retrace the Scottish ground they had quitted, was, however, impracticable; and other surer friends having sent pledges of their faith from the south-west of England, thither the stanch old Massey became the conductor of the royal little armament.

It was a courier passing from the commonwealth's army, with the unexpected news to London of the far advance of the royal march on its western route, whom Tyrrell met at the post-house on the Arelby road, and whose information made him think it prudent to take his charges into a different path;

which information told, that General Massey had not only been an able pioneer of the little armament that followed him, over the difficult passes of the ancient debatable land between Annandale and Cumberland, but he had brought it through the most intricate track of the latter moss-trooping country itself; also thridding the hill-bound lakes of Westmoreland, and the rich valleys of the next two shires, without injury or molestation: and in consequence of this sort of neutral acquiescence on the part of the counties through which he marched, there had been small bruit of his progress at all; none rising to oppose him, and very few resorting to the royal colours he displayed. How, indeed, could it have been otherwise? For the prime of each district were following the banners of the commonwealth leaders, either from choice or compulsion; and they had an army, one way or other, amounting nearly to a hundred thousand men. — Therefore, until a detachment from Cromwell's division, which had expedi-

tiously pursued Charles from Scotland by a parallel eastern route, turned off across the country into Cheshire, and lay in wait to interrupt General Massey at Wallington Bridge, no opposition had been offered to the advance of the royal columns.

But when the same reporter of the progress Charles had made, told, that though his fore-runner had forced a passage over the bridge, it might be considered to have been by the despair only of a forlorn hope, the whole of the royal columns together not amounting to fifteen thousand men; and that two republican divisions, far exceeding his number, were pressing on to give a vital check to the vanguard; while the Lord-General himself was in full march on the left flank of the young tyrant, to close upon him whenever it suited his Excellency's judgment on time and place, to make that second signal example before the nations, of England's determined extermination of monarchy; those commonwealth-men who heard the reports

could not but conclude they had little to really apprehend.

On these grounds, when the news came to the bordering shires, no doubts were entertained of the result by any of their towns; all who met in their council-halls being of but one opinion — that the wisdom and warlike talents of their Lord-General must be invincible. Thus, then, only fresh laurels for him and the commonwealth in general were looked to, while the fray lay at any distance from their own individual doors: and, indeed, few expected that so large an opposing army would suffer it to draw any nearer to them.

However, some of the secret friends of Charles, having better information of the hopes as well as swiftness of his advance, had bestirred themselves to assist certain meditated risings, to meet him in the most south-western counties. For in the midst of all the brilliant successes which decked the name of Cromwell, and seemed, by their proposed effects, to be the property of the commonwealth, there

were many persons in the towns and the country at large, besides those who never had wished a change of the old British constitution, who began to regret the alterations they now saw, both with regard to the new fashions adopted in legislation and in warfare. The first had become almost entirely at the beck of a kind of dictatorship, ruling from what it called the exigencies of the moment; and the second showed a face which had never been beheld in Christendom before. The Lord-General swept the fields of his victories on English ground, and over English men, with an unsparing hand; and gathering in whatever prisoners survived the carnage of the day, he bound them together in strings, and then drove them down towards any port near his triumphant route, to be thence shipped off, with a price on their heads, to be sold like beasts of burthen into the new settlements of the West Indies; — there to blacken in the sun, labouring by the side of the lash-imbruted tropic-captive, till the free-born Briton sunk into the

same machine of sense and service — or quenched his life in despair, that the inexorable task-master might not compel him to so forget the man in the slave, — or, otherwise, resigned to live on under an Almighty eye, that would at last avenge, he continued patiently at the toil; gnawing, indeed, the fetter on his limbs, till the iron entered his soul; and the terrible record was written full in the doomsday-book of the Judge of all men — that such had been the fate assigned to a brother Briton, and a gallant soldier taken in the fair field, by the professing champion of British liberty and rights!

These were the acts of the Lord-General, which set the remnant of loyal hearts in England so aghast, that their forbearance could endure it no longer; and others, touched with feelings of humanity, as well as being attached to the ancient code of their forefathers, and deeming the laws of civilized man with man not to be broken on any account; these persons, in casual converse with those friends of monarchy, whom they

once deemed the advocates of sheer tyranny, now evinced a tacit readiness to bear their parts in hailing any reasonable measures for securing the return of a system of government, which at least gave a man knowledge beforehand of the laws he might be called to obey; and when war was incurred, made it to be one of soldiers on soldiers, who have rights of protection in defeat, of as sacred an obligation to be mutually maintained as any the law of nations can preserve;—and not like licentious pirates, contemning man and his Creator, descending on a country for plunder, extirpation, or leading into captivity.

Thus impelled, one of the first little bands which had collected itself together to welcome the dawn of better things in England, was the one before mentioned as having taken up its bivouac behind the wood near Upton; previously having marched by remote paths, from the place of rendezvous in Herefordshire, through the bushy defiles of the wild heath-land which wound by the foot of

the Malvern hills, to its present well-screened ambuscade. None in the town suspected the neighbourhood of such visitants. For though Tyrrell had told his friend the goldsmith all he had learnt of the affair at Wallington Bridge, and, indeed, was the first communicator of the tidings to him, that sturdy-minded republican scoffed at the presumption of Charles's English march altogether, and ridiculed the notion of augmenting the least precautionary care of the place, beyond its customary routine. Nor, indeed, did Tyrrell think there could be much reason for opposing this judgment; for he did not deem it possible, that, should even the best fortune happen to Charles, he could be so far on his southern track for many days; and the greater probability was, he would meanwhile be cut off entirely.

Such being the sentiments of both landlord and guests — for Felton seldom gave himself the trouble to maintain any opinion different from Tyrrell, who, in fact, took the responsible part in most

matters — their self-satisfied host, though a grave magistrate of the town, thought it no very unpardonable breach of worshipful decorum, if he and they should pass a merry hour that night, ere they retired to rest. However, he proposed the carouse should not take place under the sleeping chamber of Mistress Woolnoth and her niece, but be adjourned to a capital cider-cellar on the opposite side of the street, where the captain of the parliament company, sent to discipline the civic garrison, held his quarters, and who, he knew, would gladly join the cup with veteran comrades. Thither, then, the goldsmith and his two worthy guests transferred themselves, without any person of his house being aware of their having left it; and in a private room of that cider-cellar, so well accustomed to the like orgies, they and the captain of the garrison drank down the usurper, till the juice of the apple had deprived all of their senses as effectually as ever the grape did; and they sunk down where they sat, each overpowered on the floor

where he fell, in a trance of stupid inebriety.

Easily, then, might the perfect silence and stillness be accounted for, that reigned in the deserted mansion, which was the lodging-house of Mildred and her companions; they, dreaming of reaching Arelby in safety, and reposing themselves peacefully under its shades, while their neglectful guardians, in a distant spot, were dosing over visions of drowning cavaliers under the bridge of Wallington, and hanging up the survivors over its wain-irons.

The affair of that bridge might well be the portentous burthen of many thoughts that night; for it was the tidings of its success which had hastened the little band of the bivouac to their present quarters, having determined them to attempt taking possession of the town of Upton by surprise. To demand its surrender of the notoriously insolent goldsmith, its chief magistrate, Colonel Massey knew would be to invite insult from him, and insure the total disappointment

of their views: for the alarm once given by an abortive requisition, might set every other minor garrisoned town on the alert, to show the same easy mode of evincing warlike allegiance to the republic; but seizure of the place would speak a conclusive language, and the answering effect might be anticipated. Hence, to attack it by night, by a kind of camisado, in which care should be taken to spill as little blood as possible, at least, to spare every unarmed citizen, and every man who would lay down his arms; was the decision of the little council of war, which Colonel Massey held the morning of that day, in the old pit of Marcley-hill; and thence commenced their carefully-ambushed march towards the proposed point of their halting bivouac.

One of the persons who formed that council had arrived only two days before on the coast, having been driven by stress of weather into port there, and obliged to land during the repair of the little isle-trader that brought him from Jersey, with the intent of a much longer

voyage; but a friend of Massey's chancing to meet him on the beach, the instinctive free-masonry, we may call it, which abides in the spirits of some men, soon found its answering signs between the Marcley-hill partisan and the stranger wandering alone on that rocky shore.— The result was, the stranger learnt that Charles Stuart need no longer be sought in Scotland; and, with that information, he was told all that had occurred to influence the adventurous monarch to take his course to England. Hence a voyage round by the Isle of Man, to the Scottish ports in that direction, being proved useless towards the stranger's object, which was to deliver a trust of importance into the hands of the young king, personally; he, who was also a young man, and had therefore embraced the enterprise of bringing it, with an ardour that would not foresee obstacles, or at any rate had determined to breast them all — he here decided, as the readiest way of accomplishing his task, to dismiss all concern with the vessel that brought him, and

join his fate with that of Colonel Massey and his friends. While the little council of Marcley-hill was sitting, even in the moment the measures on Upton were resolved on, their expected trench-master entered, and, to their surprise, with a stranger. — His purpose, and whence he came, were instantly confided to the Colonel by his conductor; but to the rest he was introduced merely as a young cavalier, who had crossed the broad seas in something not much better than a smuggling smack, to buckle his fortunes, in weal or wail, to the destiny of their present cause.

"But his name?" demanded the oldest soldier of the party. "We must all know each other here." — "I have no reason to be ashamed of mine," returned the stranger; "but I am connected, by relationship, with persons in this miserably-abused country, who make me ashamed of theirs; and did mine transpire in the hearing of any of them, the errand on which I come could not indeed be effected; but the consequences of my being known as

the messenger, might, to some honest men, now perhaps on the spring to cross the gulf between truth and falsehood, be fatal to them, and, in that case, most injurious to the cause. If this brave assembly doubt me after this explanation, let any man of it say so, and I shall find my course, I trust, to my point alone."

"No, no," was the general exclamation, and of the veteran first. "It is enough," added he: "we have your heart — that is written in your face; and your sword may make you a name, this night, amongst us all. On with us, then, to the escalade of proud little Upton!"

It was then explained to their young partisan, that the object was to gain and maintain that town, as a serviceable rallying post, being so advantageously situated near the borders of three of the counties the best disposed towards the final success of the royal enterprise. — He entered into all their views, with that sanguine, but silently attentive enthusiasm, which belongs to ingenuous youth, and the impression of the cause

being that of the injured party. On that side, the drawing of the sword to such spirits appears with the ancient lustre of old chivalry, as if a beam from heaven sat on its point, to direct and sanctify the stroke. The young stranger's bosom was full of these persuasions; and, with a natural bound of heart, he laid aside the yeoman disguise of the isle trafficker, through which, indeed, the trench-master had discerned the mien of something nobler than the raiment; and when he was exchanging its rough woollen gaberdine for the martial accoutrements with which Massey soon provided him, to be in uniform with the rest — (but he had a father who had buckled his own sword on his eagerly-adventurous side, ere he had parted with him, and the gaberdine had covered it) — when he was thus cladding himself in his new and fitter guise, the veteran before mentioned, and who acted as major to the little band, declared, "There was a licence he for once would borrow from the commonwealth folk, who, when occasion needed,

bedaubed themselves with all manner of titles and armorial coats, as well as making spoil of the velvet suits and good lands of their betters! — And as a soldier must of necessity have a name to answer at muster-roll, or lead others by, he begged leave to dub their present new ally with that of his own nephew, the brave Colonel Carless, who, but for a broken leg confining him then at his home in Cornwall, would have been one of the foremost to take post in their little battalion."

Their young ally, or rather as he would have called himself, their young recruit, laughed at the proposition of making his entry into the field of arms with so vaunting a title; and, perhaps, smiled the more at the blundering simplicity of the honest veteran, in connecting his really intended compliment with so anomalous and therefore ridiculous an assumption of the republicans. However, as the stanch old soldier showed he would not be well pleased to be contradicted in his present humour, Massey

made that sort of good-natured sign to their new friend, which at once decided him to take whatever badge of recognition in the band its veteran major had chosen to assign. In fact, he felt that in such a moment as the one anticipated, the *nom de guerre* was nothing—the heart that bore it every thing. He had never, certainly, yet drawn a sword otherwise than in exercise or sport; but he was as familiar with its grasp, and as expert in its management, perhaps, as any man who might be called to wield it that night; therefore, he trusted, to at least not disgrace the name of the gallant Carless, who, that night, in his person, was to share the character of the field, though not its dangers.

His new friends having made their cautious march to the little plain of Upton wood, after an hour's watchful rest, all rose at the appointed time, from under the thick bushes which had been their camp, and began to form themselves in order of advance. The attack was to be made in two divisions; one to assault

the works of the town on the side next the wood, which was its western face; and the other to make demonstrations more to the northward, where some hillocky ground would cover their approach, and assist the operation intended there,—rather a feint to distract the enemy, than considering it a point, to turn to any superior advantage. A certain number of men carried the ladders for the escalade, and the fascines for filling up the ditch, where the surprise was really intended. It was known to Colonel Massey that part of the old castle of former days, which had been appropriated as the most honourable quarters for the parliament regulars, whose duty was to discipline the militia, its proper garrison, stood not very far from the western ramparts of the town; and he thought, if he could get possession of that, it would be winning the citadel: therefore to this object the chief aim of the attack was to be directed.

The detachment for the feint consisted of about fifty men; and as its duty required the most discretion of the two,

being to first make a judicious pretence, on a particular sounding of the bugle; and then to follow up the success of the other division, by joining it in the town through the western gate, which Massey hoped to gain, and give signal of by a second bugle — the veteran major took command of the feint, and asked their young coadjutor if he would like "*to flesh his maiden sword* by his side, and so support him like a nephew?" The stranger declared his readiness to do both; in short, to take his post where-ever more experienced heads than his own should command him. All else, however, of the younger sort pressed to belong to the at once assaulting party; and the now reputed Colonel Carless would have been equally impatient, perhaps, to have joined it too, had Upton been on any other soil than England; but when he found himself actually on the march towards it, he felt an honest Englishman's repugnance at making the first step he put into any town of his country, a blood-stained foot-print.

The two divisions being properly marshalled, and acquainted with their respective duties, set forth from the field of their short bivouac. Massey, of course, and the trench-master with him, led the main body. It had some time ceased to rain; but the night was very dark, both from the lateness of the hour and the thickness of the clouds, which obscured every ray from star or moon; and the soft damp of the earth not being splashy, prevented the sound of so many footsteps making any noise observable even by the men who trod it. They were ordered to keep an undeviating silence, and the stillness was so profound in the air also, that while they proceeded, they distinctly heard the clock of the church in the town strike twelve, and then chime its two quarters after it. All was blackness around them; yet the leaders had sufficient knowledge of the ground they were passing over, to render it easy, when arrived at a certain part of the common they were crossing, to divide thence for their different points; — it was

at about a quarter of a mile from the works they were severally to attack and menace. The divisions separated without a word; and as the young stranger, with his harquebuss on his shoulder, turned to march abreast with the veteran who was to be alike his commander and his example, he put up a true brave heart's prayer: — "Young as I am, it is not a soldier's name I seek in this expedition, but a door by which peace may enter to this unhappy land. And, may Heaven pardon the innocent blood shed this night, if such be the calamity of my sword!"

The Major's little party having noiselessly reached the hillock nearest to the bastion against which they were to open their fire, they ascended it with equal caution, but still to remain under mask of its brow till the signal should sound from Massey within the town for commencing their operations. The eagerly-penetrating eye of the young cavalier, now accustomed to the darkness, began to distinguish the outline of objects; and

being whispered by the Major to gently creep to the summit, and make what observations he could, he obeyed, and soon discerned the line of the houses of the town within the works, where the tower of the church over-topping them all, stood yet blacker in the darkness than the darkness itself; but not the trace of a light could be seen, twinkling like a single watch-lantern, nor as a glow-worm awake in that unconscious city of profound repose. It was an awful thought to the novice soldier, the few moments that were to intervene between these observations, and the summons that would rouse every sleeper there from their rest—man, and woman, and child! And, even in the very instant of these meditations, amid a silence like the grave, and a darkness like its pall, the report of a single musquet was heard, and from the rampart of the town in the quarter where Massey was to mount by escalade. It seemed to be answered by a score at least of the alarmed sentinels. But the cavalier was instantaneously at his post by the side of

the Major and the rest, all reclining on their arms in mute stillness behind their natural breast-work of the hill; but he could hear his own heart beat.

Another minute, and such sounds, with the thoughts which accompanied them, were all overpowered by the volleys of musquetry, and the cannonade, which then burst from that side of the town. The sky, too, had become one rolling sheet of flame, mingling with the red smoke along the luridly-enlightened clouds. But the firing, and the shouts of the combatants, were not the only sounds that rose on the young soldier's ear; the cries of the affrighted inhabitants, and the greater number of the unwatchful militia, running to arms; the barking and howling of domestic animals, and a universal uproar of every species of distress, distracted and appalled him, while waiting for the concerted signal that was to bring him into the action also. At last, the bugle blew its blast. At one step, he and the Major, and the men in their party, were at the top of the hil-

lock, and their part began. They on their side made that quarter of the heavens answer to the other in frightful conflagration; for they fired their discharges of musquetry in platoons without intermission; and they had brought a couple of manageable field-pieces with them, which made a tremendous ostentation of assault in that comparatively disregarded part of the town. The natural consequence ensued, on finding the defence of the place in the state it was.

Its roused garrison, whether of the parliament forces or the town militia, were lost in consternation at being startled from their rest by the warning shots of the dismayed sentinels on the works, at the time the first line of royalists had leaped from their escalade to within the parapet; one of whom, by stumbling against the half-sleeping sentinel on that spot, had occasioned the alarm which gave the general notice to the others, that they had an enemy before them. When those of the garrison could hastily array themselves and collect together, they rushed immediately

to the works, and attacking the assaulters already in possession, fought hand to hand and breast to breast with them; while their flanking batteries near, were firing into the black vacancy beyond, not knowing the extent of the host that might be advancing to follow these daring leaders; — an enemy who, indeed, seemed to have risen from the earth against them: — for it appeared impossible that the royal army itself could have proceeded so far, and without any immediate fore-runner of its approach. Besides, what object could be their little town to the young monarch, who had hitherto only halted before great cities? But that was nothing to the purpose; — the attack was made, and they must do their best to repel it. But how? was the desperate question they asked themselves, when the assault broke from the second quarter; and, distracted, they ran from the right to the left, calling on all who could, to arm, and follow them, to meet an enemy by whom they seemed surrounded.

Meanwhile, the captain of the commonwealth part of the garrison was in no state to do more of his duty than to scramble up from the floor, where, besotted, his senses had cast him, and where the first volleys of the musquetry had found him; and, snatching his sword, he darted out of the house, to what intent he hardly knew, — but it was towards the well-known thunder, whether it came from earth or sky.

Tyrrell and Felton, too, were soon on their feet likewise, remembering, with confusion of thought, the charge they had in hand; and they rushed into the street, to regain the house they had left so improvidently. But it was more than they could do for some time, though shrouded by the shadows of the night, to get through the *mêlée* of friend and foe in that belligerent street; for it was the main path-way between the two assailing points: and the confusion and the horrors of parties, often mistaking friends for foes, — where all spoke the same language, and were the same peo-

ple — was indeed fraught with the most direful disorder.

However, the two men at last accomplished their purpose, in getting round to the garden-gate of the house through the church-yard. To have attempted a way in by the shop-door in the street, would have been to have betrayed their own quarters to the egress of the invaders; but when they arrived at the garden-gate, they found it locked. In fact, the goldsmith, when he brought away his guests to their revel, had secured his own premises behind him. Where he was now, they could not tell, and they had not time to seek; for he had vanished from the cider-cellar even before themselves, on the burst of the uproar which had roused them all. Tyrrell and Felton, therefore, had no resource but to attempt scaling the high wall of the garden, or to batter in its strong door; which latter they immediately essayed to do, with the assistance of some old head-stones they tore up from the church-yard.

Meanwhile, those in the house had been made fully sensible of their terrible situation and unprotected state. On the first musquet being fired, the light slumber into which Betha had fallen was disturbed; but that single sound could not carry any alarm to a simple maiden, who knew nothing of the import of such signals. In the instant after, however, when the warning-shot was echoed by others, and the first hostile volley burst, and then went on, with all that continuous sort of independent firing, which, in its very nature, seems to bear a herald of death in every rapidly-succeeding voice of war, Mildred started aghast up in her bed, and, half awakened, demanded aloud — "What is the matter?"

Betha, in an equally nameless dread, could only answer she did not know; but yet, trying to rally her amazed faculties, she added — "Perhaps it may be a rejoicing, for some new success in Scotland."

"Ay, ay," returned the dame, "the Lord-General must have overthrown him

again! and near ourselves too!—Blessed be the victory!" And with a joy almost frantic, she repeated, or rather cried aloud, stretching up her spread hands in the bed—"Blessed be the victory!—We are now safe, and my fears are over!"

But at that moment the door of Benomi's closet was gently opened, and his tender voice said from within—"No, no; it is no victory. I see from my window, many fearful lights, and the street full of people, running in great distress. O get up, and dress yourselves!"

That seemed to Mildred the annunciation of her death sentence; she shrieked, and threw herself back on her bed. Betha had quitted hers, at the first appalling words of Benomi; for they were instant evidence of the fact. She had not time to think of such admirable presence of mind, and good judgment in so young a creature; but she felt the cogency of his advice, and while she hastily covered her sleeping-dress with some other garments, she saw her moni-

tress was so far recovered from her first excess of dismay, as to leave her bed also, and begin to put on some raiment. Benomi had shut his door again, when he had given the necessary warning, to complete his own dressing; and the flashes of the firing streaming down the street, showed him, unshuttered from the window, where he occasionally glanced out, the half-arrayed soldiers passing to the points of attack; and he heard the lamentations of the families of the aroused citizens, from their opened windows, as the men of the families rushed, armed, from the doors. War, then, was assuredly there! But what the conflict was about he could not guess; for in his past solitude, wherever it had been, no communication of what happened beyond its confines, had ever been made to him; and Geoffrey, in parting with his daughter, had enjoined her and those with her, never to speak of any of the "unkinged race," and their banished partisans, in that child's presence, and, therefore, never to allow a hint of a con-

test in their behalf being yet in existence any where. Consequently, the first knowledge that secluded boy had, that England was not every where a garden of peace except in his poor rifled bosom, was seen, and vaguely conjectured why, from that little closet window.

The chamber which his female companions occupied, looked into the high-walled enclosure towards the church-yard; hence was precluded from any view like his, had its alarmed inmates sought it; but the tremendous sounds from without were enough for them. Mildred, indeed, was wholly given up to a distraction of terror that seemed incapable of comprehending any other idea. Tyrrell had imparted to her, at the village on the marsh, the sudden advance of "Charles Stuart and his malignant troops," as she called them, from Scotland; and also the advantage they had gained at Wallington Bridge, which had made it expedient to take her, and her charges out of the way of his march. Fear first took possession of her at that

time, though only to an extent that could be controlled, for its object yet appeared at a distance. Now the evil was come, and her apprehensions knew no bounds. In short, she could conceive nothing else, but that retaliation of the Lord-General's mode of warfare, would be exercised in even fuller measure by the successful malignants; and that, with regard to herself, she and her whole party were within the grasp of the young tyrant's vengeance. Thus thinking, every sweeping volley of the musquetry, every thunder of the cannon, and tumultuous noise of undescribable sounds in the not distant streets, drove her to new paroxysms of fainting terror; and dropping the clothes from her grasp, with which she was tremblingly trying to cover herself,—she sunk down again on the side of her bed, leaning her head, in a state of speechless inability to assist herself, against the post of its canopy.

Betha, who had just buckled her slight boddice round her waist, hastened to the poor dame, and implored her to rally her

confidence in heaven, and to allow her to cover her from the cold. Mildred was answering her in the incoherent words of utter despair, when Benomi, hearing what passed (part of which had, perhaps, as much amazed himself as the attack had astonished them), he ventured to open his door again, and falteringly asked, whether he might not be allowed to assist the dame; for, indeed, every moment rendered it more necessary they should be prepared for any thing that might happen. At sight of him, — and on the opening of his door the confusion in the street being more distinctly heard, and the flashing of the fiery contest seen, — Mildred had started, glaring on him her affrighted eyes, and exclaimed, wringing her hands towards him — "Out upon thee! thou curse to thy father's house! — why came thee to bring trouble on it thus?"

He did indeed stand aghast at this; the malediction having divorced that blood from his heart, which all the tumult of the death-fires around had not

blenched a drop. "Dame!" answered he, when he wrested his tongue from the cleaving with which her words had forced it to the roof of his mouth,—"ye—and such as ye—troubled my father's house;—else ye had never seen this day!—But may the Lord pardon all!" And he turned away, as if to the sanctuary of his own closet again.

"Benomi," cried Betha, in an agony of spirit, "she knows not what she says:—terror has taken away my beloved monitress's senses!—Come back, come back,—and if we must die, let it be together!"

Benomi did return at that adjuration; his young heart was already at her side; his only friend, who, he felt, if she knew what was then passing in his bosom, would pity the conflict there; and by whom that young heart yearned to stand, in a way that might protect her from all ills; but that was a vain wish. However, he was instantly at her side, assisting her almost powerless hands in fastening on the day-garments of the indeed almost

unconscious Mildred. Fear, in fact, now possessed her wholly; and her eye passed glazedly over the faces of Benomi and her trembling pupil, as they pursued their silent task of duty towards her.

Such variety of misery on three helpless human beings, had taken place within the short space of twenty minutes — for not more had elapsed from the report of the first musquet, until the moment when the astounded matron sate like an automaton between the clasping arms of Betha, who had just completed her raiment, and they all heard the outward doors of the house suddenly assailed, and a loud tumult without, manifestly accompanying the forcing entrance. Then, in frightful echo, came shrieks from within the house, of the serving damsels of the goldsmith, down from their garret: those hard-labouring creatures, being heavy sleepers, had not been sensible to any uproar before, or had not regarded it till danger seemed to threaten themselves; and the apprentice, too, quite a lad, whose bed-room was the shop, had not

stirred either till he found it assaulted; and then, hastening every where to seek or enquire for his master, he had been the first to arouse the maids. In their frantic search, the whole party rushed into the room of their master's guests, thinking it possible they might find him there; and they had scarcely added to its scene of terror by their distracted questions, and screaming on his name for protection, when the door of the shop was burst in. Then Mildred began mingling her cries with those of the women; she calling on Tyrrell and Felton with a strength almost supernatural, for a sudden recollection of their powerful arms, and their obligations to defend herself and their master's daughter to their last gasp, had nerved her with a transitory confidence in their assistance; and while she called, she heard their voices, even then, in coarse and clashing contest of words and swords, in the passage of the house, seeming the very echo to her summons. But the conflict was not stayed; it approached the room; the

affrighted turmoil there, indeed, directing the invaders where to find those they deemed the goldsmith's family.

His domineering insolence some little time before, to two or three in that party, because he knew they were royalists in principle, had determined them now to make spoil of his hoards, and throw them into the needful treasury of the cause, he had boasted that he, and such as he, "had spurned into the mud!" And having passed through the shop without seeing the coffers, in which its day-display might be expected to be cased for the night, they were pressing on, to find him or his family, and to compel an instant surrender of the whole, when they encountered Tyrrel and Felton in the lobby, at the head of the two flights of stairs, the one leading from the shop-floor, the other from the garden, into which they had indeed driven its door from its hinges. The struggle commenced; and thus, pell-mell, with the resistless force of overwhelming numbers, the invading party drove their two oppo-

nents, though still desperately fighting, into the very chamber where the dame's reiterated cries seemed to hail them.—Both the men were wounded—Felton found that he was mortally—but he staggered in, still manfully using his sword-arm to the last. All was too distinctly visible to the inmates of that chamber, not only by the light the scared apprentice had brought in from the shop (and who had now disappeared somewhere), but by the little lamp, which Mildred's own hand had lit, when going to the rest which had been so awfully broken; and the scene that presented itself was horror to Mildred most especially; thus seeing her only protectors driven in before their enemies, though like the last bay of the hunted boar under the tearing blood-hounds.

But her eyes were scared with yet a direr sight—her safety at once attacked. For while one part of the furious band were still contending with their two unflinching adversaries, others dashed towards the spot where she sate, with Be-

tha's arms clinging round her. The rest of the women were huddled all together, crouched down close behind her. Benomi, on the instant of the irruption of the soldiers, by an immediate impulse, put himself before the dame and Betha, and covered, he believed, the trembling pair with his stripling form: his arms, at least, were spread over them, while his face was turned, glowing with something the expression of a guardian angel, yet his eyes fixedly gazing on the direful spectacle before him. One of the invaders, in a voice of command, called on the dame to give up the keys of her husband's ill-gotten wealth, or see her children murdered on the spot! And while he was speaking, another descrying the glittering jewels of a small picture of her mother, which Betha always wore in her bosom, and the disorder of her dress now exposed to view, the tempting treasure excited the sordid appetite for personal plunder in such scenes, and he put forth his mailed hand to wrest it forcibly away.

Benomi now heard, saw nothing in these two men but menace and outrage, to the helpless objects under shadow of his feeble arms, and he exclaimed— "Soldiers! are ye men, and Englishmen, and thus attack women? By the name, ye came here to respect — I adjure ye desist, by that of Charles Stuart!"

"Blessed child!" broke from the surprised and grateful Mildred, dropping her head upon his shoulder. Felton, as he sunk under the final thrust of the victorious assailant that was pushing him on, cast his fierce eye round at these latter sounds; and, with a yell as if he were summoning fiends to his assistance, he cried out, "Perdition shall not have my soul, without my vengeance on that name!" and firing a pistol he at that instant had drawn from his belt, the ball entered the head of Mildred, who, as has been said, smitten with contrition for her harshness to the generous child, had dropped her face on his shoulder; and the death that was meant for him she now received. Her instant gasp told the

shot was fatal: one short convulsive but speechless struggle succeeded; and then, ceasing to breathe, she fell back lifeless on the bed. During this, though the room was full of smoke from the shot, the cry informed Tyrrell of what had happened; and having just overthrown his own direct antagonist, by a stab through the side, he felt himself, close to Felton, then on the ground also; and stooping to him, he demanded, in a stern voice, "Were you mad, to murder the only witness in our favour?"

"The boy! the boy!" was all the other's dying rage could utter, before the last pang of his mortal life dismissed his blackened soul to its eternal judgment. But Tyrrell had heard enough to be quite aware of the intent, and he turned to the doleful shrieks of Betha, who, till that moment of death, had been dumb amidst the thronging terrors; but now, weltering in the blood of her she still grasped in her arms, she sunk on the bed with the lifeless body; still, however, uttering cries that seemed so

piteous, no crust of earth could stay from reaching heaven. Tyrrell felt he never had heard such piercing agony before, though he had been in many a scene where he had caused the like. And what were the answering emotions in that ruffian's heart? Not pity, not ruth of any kind. He was only the more conscious of having deserted his post that night, and of its consequence to his interests. He saw the faithful friend of his master destroyed before his eyes, and by the comrade that was to have assisted him in protecting the whole of the party confided to their care, from aught but themselves. And he saw the victorious enemies around him who were to bear off the prize, for which his master and himself, and thousands more, had sold the life to come.

"It shall not be!" cried he within himself. "Felton meant wisely; and if I ever meet Geoffrey Baldry again, one act shall compensate for the other, and so wipe the score!" Muttering thus, he crouched closer to his expiring comrade,

groping for the second pistol in his belt; sagaciously preserving his own two, ready charged for his self-defence, perhaps, in the next instant. The cloud of smoke being yet over every object, Tyrrell could do this unobserved. But the cry from that chamber had attracted more of the hostile party to enter the house; and led in by an officer (the others were wholly a set of the common men) they poured into the room. Tyrrell then saw no time was to be lost, if he meant to do what he meditated, and save his neck afterwards; for the current of air, from the rush in at the door, made a sudden vacuum in the sulphurous cloud, which displayed the wretched group on the bed, with more than one eager plunderer hovering near the spot, to be the first to catch the glittering bauble from the daughter's bosom, and compel her to give the information and the key the mother could no longer deliver. Benomi was standing close to where they lay, his face and hair stained with the blood of Mildred, not now with his arms held over

them, but with his clasped hands raised to Heaven, to which his sweet imploring eyes were elevated also.

While in that action, Tyrrell fired at him; — and as another shriek, more deadly than all before, burst from the heart of Betha, — for Benomi had fallen on the body of Mildred, — the wretch who had done the deed exclaimed to himself — "There! I have sent a soul to bliss; yet I shall have deeper hell for it! — but what of that? It may, or it may not be! — so, here's for the life that is." And while the room was involved in the denser billows of the two mingling smokes, Tyrrell had passed through the half-open door of the closet where Benomi had slept. For, as the ruffian had seen the apartments before they were appointed for their guests, he knew this closet looked into a short street leading into the main one; and, by a speedy movement he reached the window, which he found open, and leaped from it on the top of a bulk-head, whence dropping himself into the street, he took his chance

for escape amongst the universal commotion.

The officer of the party happened to be the young cavalier of the bivouac, having, with his veteran leader, repelled a sally which some of the commonwealth-regulars had desperately ventured from a gate near the hillock, to turn the two field-pieces, and, following up so lucky an advantage, they entered the town with the flying *sortie*. He was hastening on, by command of the Major, with half his little detachment to join the chief battle, then raging round the castle-barracks, (the veteran himself, with the rest of his division, turning to answer the bugle-signal by his presence at the great gate,) when the cavalier, while obeying his orders, heard that deathful woman's cry from the goldsmith's house. The sound thrilled to his soul; — to pass the door whence it proceeded was impossible, and he rushed in, followed by a certain number of his men, through the shop and passages, and up the stairs, the reiterated cry, and the tumult besides, telling him

that war was there. The parting smoke, as has been noticed, unfolded for a moment the scene whence it arose; but even in that brief glance, the officer saw the whole, and sent his voice before him, ere he could enter the room himself, calling aloud—"Peace! in the name of your king, and Heaven!"

Tyrrell, hearing the words, made them the signal for the mortal sentence he had just determined: he pointed his pistol where he knew his sure hand would not miss, and the flash, and the report, and the smoke, again rifled the visible tragedy from the stranger's eye; but the voice of its agony was more harrowing than ever; and the young soldier, shuddering at such paths being possible to be found in the course of the just cause he had embraced, made his way, unobstructedly, indeed, through the wreathing smoke, to the bed-side, for his mandate had arrested every foot and hand on its errand of violence there; and ordering one of his men to open the windows, for the clearing of the air, and the others to

make the villain a fast prisoner, whom he had seen do the dastard deed, he approached the bed, and touched the hand of the only living being that breathed upon it. The soul-stricken Betha did not attempt to move it away; her strength was powerless for any further action on earth; and believing that her own death-hour was now come, though, perhaps, not by a mode so immediate as that of those before her, she was just able to change her present low moaning cries to the hardly-articulated words — "Kill me quickly, by these, and I shall bless you!"

The tone of her supplication told the anguish, the bitter, hopeless anguish from which it spoke; and turning her face inward upon the pulseless breast of her who had so lately pressed her there in fond affection, her swooning senses became lost to her for awhile. The cavalier, who tenderly grasped her cold, nerveless hand, had seen such a swoon before, and knew its marks distinctly from those of death, though, indeed,

death's shaft had produced it in both instances. He had been present when the fatal tidings were brought to Henrietta of England that she was a widow, and that two of her children yet remained in the power of their father's murderers. The cavalier felt awed at this recollection, and inwardly bowed to the fearful retributions on the heads of the families of the regicides. "But let God alone strike such," said he, "for he can heal! Man's duty is mercy to the innocent." This was uttered in his thoughts only, while he did his best to alleviate the misery that had been inflicted.

The opened windows dispersed the smoke; and, by the one in the closet, it was soon reported to him, that the assassin must have fled. But the search for him had discovered the poor women-servants crouching behind the curtains of the bed. The cavalier spoke to them kindly, and assuring them, and all else in the house, of his protection, he bade them exert themselves to recover their swooned young mistress (for so he sup-

posed her to be), and then lifting her insensible form from the clotted bier where she lay, and placing her on what had been her own couch in the opposite corner, he resigned her to the charge of the damsels, who began immediately to apply cold water to her face and hands.

Meanwhile, he gladly turned to the sound of a quick, short breathing from the beautiful boy, whom his first glance had seen standing in so angel-like an attitude by the fatal bed; and, even in the same glance, he had beheld the flash that laid that innocent being prostrate also. The young soldier now hastened to him, and raising him on his arm, the freer air speedily revived him to sensation; and the blood beginning to flow from a wound at the side of his forehead, assisted in his recovery to more perfect consciousness. The cavalier looked at the wound, evidently given by the pistol, but he was not practised enough in such scenes, to know the extent of the injury. One of his followers, however, was of the profession which yet holds the Almighty's

shield visibly over the horrors of the war-field, and to his care he committed the boy, and the lady also;—telling him, that he should inform Colonel Massey, whom he was going to join instantly, how he had ventured to employ one of his surgeons. Then directing some of his party to carry off the two dead bodies of the men yet lying in the chamber, and dispose of them some where till they should have time to return and bury them—one, their comrade, whom Tyrrell had slain with his poniard, the other, Felton, and, though dead, looking like a fiend yet struggling in his torturing passage from light into darkness—the command was promptly obeyed. And the shouts of the continuous attack on the garrison's last refuge becoming every moment more compulsive to the presence of the young soldier, he finally ordered two of his steadiest men to keep guard over the house, and at the same time to mount the little white flag, of which his doublet was full, over each outward door, as sign that the spot was under protection of the cause of the *White Rose.*

The cavalier then sending up his promise to Gladstone the surgeon, to come back again the instant the affair going on should be concluded, or, in the case of his not being able to return, that others should be sent to sanction all he had presumed to dictate, he proceeded to take the head of his party, and led them down the street.

CHAP. XXII.

But the sun had risen ere the young cavalier seemed to have taken breath from the intermediate hours of hard grappling for the object of the night, when during the various contests, on breach and rampart, in street and market-place, on private threshold or under public dome, in all he had seen the face of civil war hideous and withering — her snake-like train of doubt and perfidy appearing every where. His soul sickened in the very blaze of his proclaimed distinguished conduct; for all that he had been commanded to attempt, he had achieved intrepidly. — But before the rising and setting of many more suns, his soul would turn yet more loathingly from such battle-fields. However, "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof."

The victory was won there, and taking

a short leave of Colonel Massey, he crossed from the guildhall of the place, (where the chief citizens, with the surviving officers of the garrison, were assembled, to ratify the surrender of the town to the king's name), and directed his steps, too well tracked by the objects of past contention, towards the first house he had entered that momentous night, and where the first wound that had gaped on him in civil war, was with the life-blood of a woman! He shuddered as he proceeded, the whole scene recurring before him.

But, meanwhile, the horrid spectacle the young soldier had left there, was veiled at least by the decent pall of death, which the surgeon Gladstone had contrived to draw over it. The visible parts of the body of the dead Mildred had been washed from their stiffened gore and wrapped in a sheet, and another spread over it hid all from view. And when Benomi's wound was examined, and found to have been occasioned by the grazing of the ball, and not its en-

trance, then it was easily bound up, and his face and his hair cleansed of their direful stains. During the whole process, the boy had borne what was done to him in profound stillness; but when it was finished, and Gladstone was going to lead him to his mattrass in the closet, where he gently told him he must lie down, for rest was necessary to his cure, he then fearfully enquired for Betha; and when the answer was, that no similar injury of any kind had personally befallen her, but that her apparent insensibility was swooning only, then Benomi seemed to rally life within him again; and he declared that it was not possible for him to lie down in any rest while she suffered: "But, thanks to Heaven, she lives!" cried he, "and, O! sir, if aught is to be done in assisting you to recover her, let me help you! It is my duty—it is all I have to give—O! do not deny me!"

Her case being indeed too extreme for the women to remedy, the surgeon did not agitate his young patient by contradiction, but permitted him to attend

at his side while he bled her; so making her heart share, though sanatively, the bleeding life-streams of that night; and the moment she opened her eyes with consciousness of whom she looked on, the cry of joy with which she flung herself on that young breast seemed to have carried her spirit with it. But when she raised her head again, and her glance recognised the white heap on the opposite bed, and the women standing round yet spreading its veiling sheet there, she started from her supported situation between the surgeon and Benomi, and would have hastened towards that spot, while her entirely-changed countenance from joy, to the amazement of her recollected cause of immediate grief, showed that nothing was left to be told her of what was there. But the surgeon held her, and Benomi clasped her in his arms. "Betha, dear Betha!" cried he, "we must be thankful for what the All-merciful has spared us!"—"I am, I am!" was her quick reply, tearing her eyes from the agonizing object; and drop-

ping her face again upon his shoulder, she burst into a torrent of tears.

The surgeon hailed these, as perhaps her preservation. He wished he could have seen any thing like the same relief to a surcharged sorrow on the pale cheek of her brother; for so he deemed that tenderly-caressing boy to be. But Benomi could not weep then; his soul was full of many thoughts and many struggles; and once or twice while he held her, and the surgeon was soothing them with sure promises of a gracious protection, both from the victor over the place, Colonel Massey, and the advancing royal Charles, he muttered to himself, "My Father that is in heaven, hold me firm!"

To such a scene the cavalier re-entered: and at the sound of the opening of the room door, both Betha and Benomi naturally turned their startled gaze. —She drew back with a recoil of re-awakening terror, clasping Benomi closer to her, for the instinct was for him.— "Don't fear," cried the surgeon, "it is the brave cavalier." Betha now under-

stood it was the officer who had rescued her from insult and death. He approached; but, though aware of his goodness, and feeling that the life within her, and that of Benomi's also, had been preserved through his clemency, yet his aspect seemed horrible to look on.—During the shadowy lights of the preceding night, and her sealed-up senses, almost all the objects of the sanguinary contest in that room had been veiled from her eyes; therefore it may be said that now for the first time she beheld the visage of war, as it looks in the terrible field. The cavalier's face and form, though both of the noblest youthful contour, were hung with its most appalling panoply. His mailed bosom was indented by thrusts and glancing balls; his riveted armlets hacked in wide gaps, showing the soaked doublet beneath, of a ghastly red; his fair scarf, the badge of the *white rose*, was dabbled in the same horrid crimson, and blackened by the steaming gunpowder, which had been his element for so many hours;—his

face bore the same lurid stains; and the long broken plumage of his morion-hat hung dark and clotted over his brow, mingled with the matted hair with which he had dried the hot drops of battle from his panting forehead. Such was the figure that presented itself to Betha, as her preserver from the past, her protector from the future!

That young cavalier had never been recoiled from before; and, now conjecturing his so frightfully war-marked an appearance, he felt the more indignation at the necessity which had made the demon of hostility come in any shape to woman in his native land. He stopped in his advance to her; but to the brave-miened boy at her side, who had risen calmly to receive him, he held out his battle-stained hand:—"I am glad to see you thus restored, young sir," said he, in a voice of such cordial greeting, and in so sweet a tone, it seemed to have nothing to do with the rough guise of the speaker; neither could it have been expected, that the beautiful and

benevolent smile which parted his lips, and beamed from his eyes of gentlest lustre, could have any affinity with the sulphurous cloud, and the atmosphere of Phlegethon, which seemed to envelope his entrance. But the smile was not a joyous one, unmindful of the grief that lay in this chamber; it was a smile of amiable sympathy, seeking to assuage the present pang by showing despondency where to hope. Benomi put his hand into that of the cavalier, and briefly said, "I thank you, Colonel Carless." But he uttered those few simple words in so earnest, so peculiarly graceful a manner, the cavalier was struck with surprise at such dignity of gratitude in the mien of a country magistrate's son. But had it been the real Colonel Carless or Colonel Massey who had seen him, either would have marvelled much more.

During a little dialogue which then took place apart between her preserver and the surgeon, Betha, in awed memory of what had passed, awaited the former's turning again towards her and Benomi,

that she might express her gratitude also to the mortal agent of the Almighty shield, which had been that persecuted child's so especial protection. She knew all that had happened, as far as the surgeon could inform her; who, in as gentle terms as the subjects would bear, had communicated every particular of the last night's horrors in that chamber, so much more disastrous to those dear to her, from the men she had deemed their guardians, than the very enemies she had dreaded; and the leader of whom had in fact been her and Benomi's rescuer from, perhaps, a final perpetration of all those treacherous guards had meditated. His voice, his countenance, and these convictions, putting to instant flight the panic apprehensions which had seized her on the cavalier's re-entrance, clad in all the hideous appearances he had been struggling to overthrow, she raised her trembling eyes to his face when he next approached her, and falteringly said, "I am a simple maiden of this unhappy commonwealth; but I am

also a Christian daughter of the same faith, which makes all merciful men brethren; therefore, I thank the King of kings, for the mercy you and this gentleman have shown to me — and to him!" — and her clasped hands pointed to Benomi: — "O! protect him to the last," cried she, "and my prayers shall follow you wherever I go!"

Benomi drew close to her at this: — "Betha," said he, in much emotion, "what do you say? I must not be separated from you; — I must go back with you: — indeed, indeed, I will; — so help me Heaven! —" and, with the last adjuration, he seemed to have forgotten that his resolution concerned any object but himself and Heaven, for he turned away, and looked up, as if the sole object of his vow were there.

Betha too well understood that the late outrage had set his mind wandering again; and the persuasion that it was so, deepened the pang in her soul when she thought of the primary cause of such alienation. "O!" said she, within her-

self, "that he had never been withdrawn from the parental care he is too likely never to see again!" And her eye tenderly fixed itself on the heavenward countenance she was then aware had other thoughts than of her.

The cavalier saw only the natural affection of a brother to a fond sister, in this bravely-expressed determination not to be divided from her as a prisoner in any manner, and at all risks; and admiring, too, the almost manly calmness with which the last invocation was delivered, the brave young soldier, himself, the more eagerly assured both they should not be divided. He then most respectfully and earnestly repeated his promises of protection, not only to themselves, but to all related to them, and also, that when their kinsman the goldsmith should return, he should find the whole of his property safe. Before Betha could collect words to reply to any one part of the generous compassion that breathed in all this, the surgeon broke in on his declaration, and told him, what the agonized

expressions from herself, and the communications of the serving-damsels, had informed him of during the first hours after the sad catastrophe, — that she and the deceased lady were no relatives of the man of the house, but travellers lodging there for the night; the end of their journey being far onwards in Worcestershire. The cavalier then assured her of his services whenever the business of the capitulation was finally settled; and the hands to do it were over the seals when he left the guildhall; — he would then be at liberty to conduct her to her home, wherever it might be in the county.

While he spoke, Betha's eyes turned to the silent bed that now contained the friend who could no longer be her maternal companion to that home, and her tears flowed afresh. The cavalier thought he understood what was passing in her mind, and he tenderly intimated (but it was a tenderness like unto that of a brother), that if she would consign the sacred duty she contemplated, wholly to him, he would take care it should be

performed with every reverence due to the honoured remains.

Betha could not speak her answer, nor could her eloquent countenance look it, for her handkerchief was then over her eyes; but she bowed her head, and her hand pressing her heart, spoke her gratitude in a language that needed no utterance. When she did force words, she tremulously said, "But, wherever my beloved monitress is laid, I must attend her to the grave!" Her emotions would not allow her to say more; but the cavalier entreated her to believe that all her wishes should be complied with.

Benomi listened with mute attention to this discourse of pledged protection from the victorious little army, and from the anticipated triumphant Charles Stuart, whom his young champion represented as being too averse to opposing rebellion by the sword, not to be eager to grant every generous proof of future amnesty to his subjects, even taken in arms against him; and as one hostage of such a disposition, the wives and daughters of those people

whom the fate of war threw into his power, would be treated even like the families of yet afar off prodigal sons. When Benomi hearkened to this, with all the commentary thoughts in his own breast, which only himself, of any there, could form an idea of what they were, the changing pulses of his heart were indeed visible on his cheek; the bright hectic colour which shot there, on the first mention of the certain approach of the royal army, flashing and receding again, with the various succeeding inferences, like the roseate lightning of a summer morning over the pale silvery sky. But when Betha spoke of being herself a mourner at the lonely grave of her whose death-wound had been intended for him, then Benomi's thoughts were recalled to that sad object; and feeling it a double duty to pay his last reverence there also, with a grateful energy animating the soft solemnity of his voice and manner, he was expressing the same to their joint friend, when at once a burst of acclamations from the populace without, who

had been awaiting the issue of the sealed bond of peace before the doors of the guildhall, reverberated through the whole street; loud hurrahs, mingling with the names of Cromwell — regicide — Charles — loyalty! — and other terms of exulting victory, and triumphant joy, rent the air, echoing from hill to hill.

The surgeon leaped up, in the fervour of the moment, crying aloud, with a ringing huzza, "Long live King Charles!" But the appearance of Benomi was now fearful to look upon. At the first burst of the acclaim, he too had started on his feet; then, with a ghastly horror of countenance, he put both his hands on his ears, and crouching down on the floor close to the knees of Betha, he buried his head in her gown, and lay moaning there, in sound not words, while his whole frame seemed shaken from its inmost centre. Betha could only hold her arms over him, pressing him to her feebly-protecting side, whom she would fain have sheltered in her heart. The key-note of these deathly tones she could

not understand; but she felt, whatever it was, they were rending his very being. Her eyes, even by the natural impulse of turning to the kind under every species of distress, looked her unutterable anguish at that moment to the amazed gaze of the cavalier, who was then regarding the sudden emotion of the boy, but more particularly the style of it, with astonishment. For it did not seem possible, that so young a creature should have such strong political prejudices as to transport him thus; nor, indeed, were it so, would it be probable that hatred of any cause's triumph could occasion demonstrations of personal fear so totally incompatible with the extraordinary steady intrepidity with which this same boy had surprised all who saw him, amidst the real terrors of the night before. But the eyes of Betha now seemed to tell their protector, there was more under this than mere childish alarm, or the incredible despair of a young republican; and the cavalier replied to that anxiously-pleading look, by enquiring,

what he could do to persuade him there was no danger of any kind, behind those rejoicings, to her or to any dear to her.

"O!" returned she, "it is not danger he fears: — but I know not what it is. — My poor, poor Benomi! —" and her head dropping on his convulsed body, she sobbed aloud. The cavalier rose, and walked the room in much emotion, feeling, if such were his soul's pangs at this scene, what must be the heavy weight on those who, trampling on the royal contrition for any excess of prerogative, and on the monarch's concessions of privileges, till the throne were almost at their feet, had brought calamities such as these into the bosom of their country; tearing up domestic peace by the roots, and giving carnage and misery instead of freedom and happiness. As long as the acclamations continued (but his warning hand had speedily silenced their echo from the surgeon), the brave mourner, that there had ever been any cause for achieving the glory they declared, constantly turned his eye on the brother and

sister, as he supposed them to be, and beheld the one not altering his shuddering position, though he had stifled his moans; and that the still bent down head of the other had ceased its vehement sobs.

When the noise in the street was over, and it had lasted for full ten minutes, Benomi heaved a sigh, as if his very soul had taken wing with it; but he withdrew his head from the deep involvement with which he had enfolded it in Betha's gown, and looked up towards her. The cavalier was then doubly amazed on seeing the change which had taken place in that beautiful young face, for it was now totally colourless; his eyes appeared haggard, for no tear had been there; and the furrows on his brow, and by the sides of his quivering lips, showed as if the blight of age had passed over it in one brief instant. Betha could only repeat, "My poor Benomi!" and she wrung her hands over him. "It is done now," said he to her, in a low whisper, "so don't mind me, Betha! — God is

good in leaving me you!" and his head sunk again upon her knee, and then he wept.

Low as that whisper was, the cavalier had heard it; and bending gently over the boy, he tenderly put his hand on his shoulder, and in terms of like import repeated the assurance that, from whatever cause those extreme emotions had arisen, they should be respected; and promising to adhere strictly to the wishes of both brother and sister, in the mode of their transfer from that town to their own home, absolutely pledged himself, that in no case they should be separated. On this Benomi raised his head, and drying away his tears with the back of one hand, while he drew that of the cavalier gratefully to his lips with the other, he tremulously said, "You are brave and kind! O sir, I am not a coward, though you see me thus. Some time you may remember that I have told you so; and I conjure you, do not forget it — if any body should ask you then — for to be thought a coward by — but it is no matter,"

added the boy, his face flushing, when he rose from his half-kneeling attitude by the side of Betha, — "when persons are in their grave, then all secrets may be known." He muttered the latter part as if to himself, and hastily walking away, evidently to avoid being questioned further, he sate down in the adjacent corner; for his weakened limbs would not carry him to a more distant part of the room, and looked calm and disconsolate on the ground, in the manner Betha used to see him before she had begun to comfort him. The cavalier could not refrain from casting a glance of pitying enquiry on her; for the boy's deportment did indeed seem very strange; and his lips dropped something of his sincere sympathy in the accumulated sorrows of such a sister. Betha's sense of her present situation was, in fact, written in her face; and she answered, but in so half-breathed a tone, none heard, save him to whom it was directed — "He is not my brother, but as dear as one; and grievous woes have brought him to what you

see!" That was enough for the ready comprehension of their pledged protector; and while he was yet observing the poor thought-wrapped child, whose lips continued to move, as if in deep communing with himself, a summons was brought from Colonel Massey, requesting the cavalier to join a council immediately.

Instantly rising to obey it, he took a respectful and compassionate leave of Betha; and begging permission to return again when the business that called him was discussed, he consigned her to the duteous services of the women of the house, which he still left under sentinel guard, and drew away the surgeon for a short while, to assist in preparing the funeral obsequies.

During the long subsequent hours that Betha and Benomi passed together alone, for the maidens did not intrude themselves except in offers of service, he gradually recovered his former self-possession, and drew again towards his tenderest friend, to soothe her, as she had

aforetime cheered him. Her countenance was as gradually deepening its character of inward distress; for she had reflected on the awful verifications of Gervase's apprehensions, in the double attempt she had witnessed, made by the two men he had suspected, on the life of that innocent child; and the occasion, inconceivable by the old man or by her, now seemed to be, that the boy might not be taken alive by any of the cavalier party. She durst not proceed one thought further; she dared not suffer her soul to breathe to itself, who must have given that order; therefore, in the depths of that soul, she cried unto her heavenly Father, to inspire her with the conduct she ought to pursue with regard to that fated one; and how not to fail in duty to him who had given her being.—With her thoughts thus darkened by the possible issues of her young kinsman being led back again into the untrammelled power of those from whom she had brought him — for a fearful horror hung over one idea there, which she would not

individualise!—she could not forbear answering one of his affectionate consolations respecting Mildred,—"that she had recalled her malediction, and blessed him ere she died,"—by asking him, whether he could form any conjecture of a reason in those two men, for what they sought to do? Benomi turned pale:—"Too well," replied he: "I long ago expected to die by their hands." Betha started from her chair, then dropped into it again. "What do you say?" cried she—"why was it so? Was it their looks—or what made you think so?" She gasped, almost faintingly, these questions; they, however, had given him time to recollect that he had trespassed on interdicted ground, and with a disturbance in his manner he could not quite quell, he answered, "Geoffrey Baldry told me, that you know I am the child of an attainted race! and, surely, all who are so, have reason to know the purpose of such guards."

Betha breathed more freely at this explanation; and, with a calmer heart and

manner, she yet pressed another question:—Why, with those impressions, he had so determinately rejected the proposal of being divided from her? "Or rather," said she, interrupting herself, "why do you wish to return to places, where you may justly apprehend meeting such men again? O! Benomi—I mean—you are now a prisoner; taken by the party, to which your sorrowing memory tells you your parents belonged. You told me once, you would rather die than be made a republican! Now, these royalists, and that noble cavalier——"

"Hush, hush!" cried the poor boy, putting his hand on her mouth, with a fearful kind of look around him—"do not tell the cavalier aught of me—I must not go with him—he must not know I am even alive!—Dear, dear Betha, let me live with you; let me die with you, any way Heaven pleases; and then all will be well. But do not look on me thus; for indeed I am not crazed in my poor head, though I know you think I am at times; but there are things I dare not utter

even to you!" When Betha, sighing, heard this, she sighed again more bitterly still, knowing there were things she knew, that she durst not tell even him, though his fate might hang on them.—She durst not urge him, by the phantom dread in the depths of her own bosom, which to herself she called a phantom, though she felt it was the substantial argument to herself, for wishing his taking advantage of his present captivity by the friends of his father's party, to regain his legitimate liberty, and be conducted by that kind cavalier to his parents. For she had heard from the surgeon, that he whom he called Colonel Carless had come from abroad, and would soon return thither. She did not speak of his parents by name to Benomi, for that would have been a breach of her father's command; and if her cousin himself remembered it, he seemed equally careful not to break any compact to a similar purpose he might have made with his inexorable uncle: both, therefore, only vaguely referred to the revered

beings he lamented, as of persons whose names may not be breathed. — Betha again and again looked on him with agony of heart, while he had resumed a sort of silence that was often his most consoling refuge; for then he was recalling to mind the substance of a little treasure he always carried in his bosom, and which he had not yet revealed even to her, was in his possession; but when he was alone, then it was his solace, and often drank his sorrowing and his grateful tears. She, too, became silent, and in the temple of her own heart again laid the cause of that innocent victim before Him who could not be deceived.

The day passed away, and the cavalier did not return; but a message arrived from him, that if he could not come himself before the evening ended, the surgeon Gladstone would. However, the sun set, and yet neither appeared; and the maidens commiserating, as they said, "the lonely young lady, and the poor wounded child, when the ghastly hours

of night drew nigh," came in a body to persuade her to remove from the gloomy chamber of death, until next morning. For though she and Benomi had persisted in keeping the sacred watch during the whole of the day, the women deemed that their united attendance there might be sufficient guard for the night. Betha thanked their kindness, but declined it in one word, by saying she considered it her duty, and she felt it would be her comfort, not to leave those revered remains until the grave should have taken them from her; therefore she and her young kinsman would still hold their vigils where they were. The women saw there was neither ostentation of grief nor indecision of purpose in this reply, but the hallowed resolution of an exemplary filial piety; and, without further presumption of entreaty, they respectfully withdrew.

Before the lapse of another hour after this, the surgeon was announced; but he came alone. The cavalier, with others, had been engaged all day inspecting the

repair of the fortifications; and the night had its duties, too, he could not dispense with for a moment; but the morning was again promised for his hoped-for visit, when he trusted to bring some settled information respecting the time of interment for the venerable remains. Gladstone then examined the state of Benomi's wound, and found it going on well: having re-bound it up, he hurried away to his duty elsewhere; but in quitting the house, he ordered on the proper guard for the night, and told the women servants they might dispose themselves to quiet rest. By the good surgeon's last words to Betha, Benomi was enjoined to seek repose; and he, after yielding to her tender commands that he should attempt it, entreated so earnestly to be allowed to sleep at least in her presence, that she assented; though she would have preferred his retiring to rest in a less dismal spot. Drawing his little pallet into the room, he laid him down on it; and such was the balmy hand of genial nature on his wearied senses, that his young limbs were hardly stretched

there ere his eyes closed, and a deep oblivious sleep wrapped him wholly.

Betha was then alone—alone, between death, and sleep, the blessed image of death; for it prefigures that state of the redeemed dead, where "mortality puts on immortality," and the awakened spirit rises from its clay-cold tabernacle, even as the refreshed sleeper leaves his bed of slumber, to retread the sunny paths of cheering life again. Such an eternal day, Betha's faith believed, would see the uprise of her she now deplored; but while she was herself on earth, she felt that death's sting would yet linger in the survivor's heart. And by what a death was this, by which she had lost the faithful monitress of her youth, the friend of her mother—indeed, she might say, her own last friend! The grisly wound by which it had been inflicted, made her fear to efface the memory of that ever-venerable countenance, by venturing a glance at the features it had deformed. Murder was then the dread image before her, in conjunction with death! And

opposite lay, cradled in his sorrows, yet in living sleep, the persecuted, intended victim of both! But innocence, and the shielding wings of hovering angels, seemed there; — and Betha thanked the God of mercy for enlightening the darkness of her direful meditations with such convictions.

Hour after hour wore on, nor did that midnight clock pass unnoticed, which was the last her ear had counted, when, just sinking into slumber the preceding night, it sounded over the living head of her beloved protectress; and before the next hour struck, she lay a bleeding corse! While the double chimes rung on, after the stroke of twelve, Betha's heart beat heavily, and when they ceased, it paused, and then it beat throbbingly again; — but all remained still around her. Where were the terrific sounds which, at that hour the foregoing night, had roused her from her peaceful rest? Where the ghastly faces that had rushed into the room? The clashing of swords — the horrid front of warfare? —

And where the living agony of apprehension for herself, and the beloved pupil under her charge, which had proclaimed every succeeding horror, in the countenance of her revered monitress? Betha turned her seeking eye. All these dire objects were indeed gone, and that "living agony" with them; — but she, the dread memorial that such horrors had actually been, lay there the fearful sacrifice!

Betha rose, and moved gently to the side of the bed where the still corse lay, not to look on it,—but she knelt down, and she laid her hand upon the spot of the sheet where she thought she might touch Mildred's hand, and she did touch it: the cold that was there struck like the chill which cleaves life in twain; but Betha did not fear it, — she was on her knees, — her mother's spirit seemed with her in that sacred duty, and hours of that night's vigils were passed there.

CHAP. XXIII.

Next morning, all was bustle in the town, and the bells were set a ringing (which mode of rejoicing had not been permitted since England bore its republican name), for new fore-runners of the coming royal army had arrived; bringing the king's message of thanks to Colonel Massey for his important exploit, and also a gracious command, that he, and the young cavalier from over-sea, who had shown such gallant bearing in his first field, should meet his Majesty that day at Worcester; which city had opened its gates to receive its royal master, and there his regal standard would be hoisted. But tidings were also on the wing, that Cromwell's vanguard, led by some of his most experienced generals, was hard upon the left flank of the royal march; hence some orders were also despatched

from the king, for some necessary military dispositions along the expected line of his march; and Upton itself, as the most momentous post on that side of Worcester, was to begin undergoing a thorough repair of its works the very next day.

All this was communicated to Betha by the surgeon and the cavalier, who hurried in together just before the latter was going to mount his horse to obey the part of the summons that related to him. And while Gladstone was attending his young patient apart, the cavalier imparted to Betha the dispositions he had made, to have the remains of her venerable friend committed to the sacred protection of the tomb that very night; considering that the only time when the solemnity would not be interrupted by the pressing businesses of the day; and, for the same reason, he had chosen the spot of interment to be in the church, that she might not be in the way of any intrusion during that hallowed hour. He added, he had presumed to mention a very late one, absolute midnight — to as-

sure himself of being at her side in that melancholy duty — and to be with her at twelve o'clock he pledged himself.— "Worcester is only seven miles from this," said he, "and Colonel Massey has promised to contrive that the king shall permit me to leave his supper-board time enough to allow me to be here by the hour I name."

Betha faltered in the reply she would have made, meaning to beseech him not to think of her and her sorrows in such a moment of loyal duty; but the words were uttered confusedly; for, indeed, her heart failed in giving breath to any thing that might take away from her that protector.

The cavalier saw the generous struggle on her tremulous lip, and interrupting the broken sentence, told her, that loyal duty would not be his duty, if it ever could interfere with a yet more primary duty—due care of one of her sex, in the helpless condition in which he had found her: — "hence," added he, "gentle lady, while I serve you, I am showing

loyalty to my sovereign's King, — and let that satisfy your kind scruples!"

Betha was indeed satisfied, and the cavalier withdrew, and the surgeon with him. Benomi's cheek glowed, and he looked after them through the window, when they had left the room. Betha observed this more than usual interest in objects or persons round him; and she remarked to him, "How kind is that cavalier! It makes one love his cause, Benomi." She was hardly aware she had said so much, till Benomi replied — "He is kind — and his cause, Heaven has already blessed. — O! may it ever, ever continue to be so!" And with the ejaculation, he dropped on his knees, and clasping his hands together, gazed upwards with such a look of holy vehemence, that Betha could have thought a sacred radiance emanated from every expressive feature — the eyes — the parted mouth — the beaming complexion! — She never had beheld, nor could have conceived it possible that such resplendent beauty could exist in human shape, and

she gazed on him as on a vision. Only an hour before, he was pale, languid, and dejected; — now, no trace of mortality seemed there. And, in fact, it was the immortal spirit within, which then became visible without him; and the light of faith, and heavenly gratitude, shone as a garment around him.

But in the midst of this, similar acclamations to those of the preceding day resounded from the nearest street. The gratulatory procession was then marching out of the gates for Worcester. Benomi started from his position, turning pale as if the wing of death had at once swept over his face: he tottered, looking round him, seemingly, for a way of escape; then sitting down on the nearest chair with a smile, but it was now one of agony, he said to himself — "Is it not as it should be?" and then he remained, with his eyes riveted on the floor, till the hurrahs died away. When it was so, he became very still; but during the acclamations, at every fresh burst, Betha had observed him shrink

inward as he had done at the first; yet some strong resolution, she perceived, was holding him firm to continue listening, without showing further expression of the same evident terror again which had driven him to her side on the former sounds. When these had ceased, and she found he did not move nor speak — and how different, indeed, did he appear now, from the ethereal creature who had shone there, in the sudden light of some happy thoughts, only a few moments before!—she drew towards him, wondering at what could be within that young bosom, to occasion such extraordinary changes. She took his hand — "Benomi," said she, "you fill me with amazement. But I should not tell you so if I did not feel distress also, on seeing the many times you are so inexplicably afflicted. Will you not confide in me why it is that such sounds as those affect you thus grievously?"

He looked at her steadfastly, then abruptly spoke: — "I will answer you truly to that question, if you will not

follow it with another, it might possibly suggest, and that I dared not answer."

"I do not ask you to say any thing, beloved Benomi," returned she, "that can give you pain to trust me with: I seek to prevent you pangs, to avert cruel associations of circumstances, if I could."

"Well, then," said he, his very lips becoming livid while he spoke, "you have in part guessed it. Those acclamations —" he paused, and resumed — "I never heard such, before those of yesterday, since the most wretched moment of my life, — and then — O! Betha, I can say no more —" and he rushed from her to the closet where his bed had been, and, throwing himself on the floor, it was long, long, ere he came forth again. Several times she drew near the closed door, to listen whether he were in any paroxysm of emotions, that she might assuage by her soothing interference — otherwise she would not break into the sanctuary of grief, even of a child — but she heard him, for a long while, sigh only, and then murmur low,

as if in prayer; and to that best medicine of the soul she resignedly committed him, leaving the door.

The subsequent hours of that day need hardly be described, for the spirits of Benomi and Betha were both busy with the different objects in their hearts: his was far from that chamber, unthinking of himself at all; while she, perhaps, thought more of him than of any other living creature. To pursue any connected discourse between them, was at an end, where both appeared fearful of betraying something to the other which ought not to be revealed; yet every word and look told to each other, that no two beings on earth could be more reciprocally dear. Betha took up her Bible, and, reading it aloud, made its holy language the balmy communion of consolation to both,—the bond of their implicit faith in each other, though the power of unrestrained confidence was denied.

At night the cavalier arrived. All was awaiting him, for Betha had not shrunk one tittle in performing a daugh-

ter's duty to the venerable corse, then in its coffin, and on its bier, ready for its last brief journey on earth. When he opened the door of the chamber of death, he found the surgeon already there, with his mourning cloak on, and Betha and Benomi also clad in theirs. They were sitting near the bier, on which the lighted lantern stood, that was to precede the little procession through the garden and the church-yard, and thence into the church. The cavalier made his appearance just as he had thrown himself off his horse, glowing with the animation of exercise (for he had galloped all the way from Worcester), but more with the traces of the rapturous joy with which he had greeted his persecuted prince as King of England, and who had received him before all in the royal cabinet with a salutation which announced him by his own name, and added this *impresse* with it — "That he had proved himself worthy of the noblest ancestors from whom he sprung, by three proofs: his brave daring, in being

the messenger of what he had brought —by his discretion, as well as valour, in the field—and by the generous manner in which he had asserted the clemency of the royal heart, in showing oblivion of all evil, wherever the sword could be sheathed on any field in his native land." Thus had the cavalier been honoured before the confidential friends of his royal master, amongst whom was his veteran major; and none were there who did not long to utter their gratulations to his noble father, then an exile in a foreign country, on having a son of such promise to renovate the old chivalry of his name, *sans peur*, *sans reproche*.

But this really well-known name of illustrious worth, was not announced beyond that room of royal confidence, some reasons remaining to hold its secrecy prudent; but yet every distinction was paid to the brave young soldier, by his sovereign's especial notice at the supper-board; and all these well-earned honours blazed on his fine countenance when he entered the solemn chamber of

mourning. His figure, too, was arrayed, not in the horrors but the graces of war; and as the full ray of the lantern converged at once upon him, in the moment of his entrance, the startled eye of Betha beheld him like a second vision of something brighter than of earth. But the dark scene that met his glance, soon shadowed his effulgence. He felt the transitoriness of all sublunary distinctions, and advancing with a reserved step, that evinced his awe of the sublimer presence in which he stood, — that of Death and Sorrow! — he bowed his heart as well as his head, during his approach; and silently taking the black mantle which Gladstone presented, the badge of mortality was instantly cast over his shew of "glory of this world" too.

A strange thought occurred to Betha in that moment. It appeared to her like the cloud which had passed over the moon, on the awful night of the spectre in the Bloomshaft field: her shrinking heart gave it that name, for she now felt, though that mysterious sight had carried

a living being, it had been indeed a fearful spectre in its portents. Such had been the brightness of the moon's light on that field — such the darkening close! "One," sighed she internally, "who looked on it then, lies here, one victim to the presage, that it boded my father's house no good! O! may it end there, or may myself be the next and the last!"

The men also, covered with cloaks, who were to be the bearers, entered the chamber, and the bier moved on. Betha and Benomi followed; but she needed a firmer arm to support her, and the cavalier, aware that it must be so, was ready to give her his. Benomi, however, remained close to her side, and with no others swelling the train than the young surgeon, the humble procession entered the church. Since the commonwealth interdiction of episcopal service there, no clergyman had been suffered in the town; therefore, the chaplain to Colonel Massey's little armament, received the bier, with the holy salutation to them

"who die in the Lord." The coffin and the mourners proceeded to the brink of the vault that was opened for Mildred. The large flag-stone which had covered it, lay on one side, and against it Benomi leaned. Betha knelt down, — and the hallowed rite proceeded. The coffin was lowered in by the men who had borne it to the grave. In bending to this solemn service, the gleaming of the faint light shed there from the single lamp lit up in the church, and the lantern which had conducted the bier, discovered from under their black outward vestments that they were soldiers, even royalist soldiers, engaged in that pious duty over the remains of a commonwealth woman, who had fallen in their sight by the hands of one of her own party! But Betha, though she saw their steel-clad arms, thought not of these circumstances till long, long after: her soul was wholly given up to woe and prayer.

Benomi, keeping his devout position also, neither moved nor even sighed, till the words of the Christian's consolation

sounded through the dark arch; those which nearly conclude the sacred rite of interment, and which the chaplain uttered with the comforting tone of a true minister of heaven: — "We therefore commit our dear sister's body to the ground; dust to dust, ashes to ashes, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life." And then, the groan that burst from the boy's lips, as he turned his face upon the stone, electrified every one present. Betha, roused from her mute grief, threw her arms over him, and her tears flowed upon his neck.

"Betha, Betha!" murmured he, while his bathed cheek met hers, "I have a sister yet!" But only Betha's ear heard that tremulous voice, speaking as it were into her very soul. The cavalier and Gladstone, and even the clergyman, paused in the service, to commiserate those young and sorrow-linked mourners. But after a few minutes of their united soothings to both, Betha and Benomi raised themselves on their knees, to abide

with reverential resignation, the completion of the ceremony; and the chaplain had again turned to his book, when the door of the church opened, and an officer under the command of the cavalier, and who knew his present occupation, entered hastily, and incautiously proclaimed his errand at the side of the yet unclosed grave.

He announced, that the town-outworks on the river side were then under a severe assault by part of Cromwell's vanguard. His troops had passed the river, under the darkness of the night, although the bridge had been broken down the day before; and the consequent surprise of the royalists posted there had been so great, that the first line of their unfinished works on this side of the bridge was wrested from them; and as General Harrison, who led the assault, was pressing on with his usual impetuosity, no time could be lost in drawing forces from the town to oppose him; and therefore the officer came to call the cavalier to head them, there being none

other of his presumed rank (that of Colonel Carless) returned from the royal rejoicings in Worcester.

On hearing all this, the cavalier stood a moment like a man thunderstruck; for the responsibility of such a summons on his unpractised judgment, awed, while the whole man in his soul seemed to nerve him to breast the juncture. The scene, too, before him added to the astounding thoughts of that crisis; for in the instant the name of General Harrison was mentioned, Betha threw herself towards her hitherto protector, and speechlessly clasped his knees: she could not utter words, but he felt her heart's throbs. "Dear lady," said he, widely mistaking the meaning of that agony, "if you fear for General Harrison, and Heaven puts it in our power, I pledge you, he shall be treated with all the generous forbearance of honourable warfare. But should he gain the advantage, then you will be safe with your friend, and Providence will have brought a consolation to you in this moment we little

anticipated: meanwhile, return to your lodgings, and be in quiet there till the issue."

During this speech, Betha was dreadfully agitated, almost powerless to express the cause of her apprehension; but when he ceased, she cried, in a voice of piercing terror — "No, no! not safe with General Harrison; that grave — that grave — rather than be given up to him!"

Benomi did not speak, but he clung to Betha, showing that he meant her to understand that their fates should be one. But before the cavalier could reply, the explosion of firing from the intermediate ground between the Severn and the town, evinced that the men driven from the surprised quarter had made a rally, and were standing battle there; hence all haste must be made to support them, and, if possible, rebut the assaulters. On this, the cavalier whispered his orders to the officer, who immediately disappeared from the church, and all the soldiers who had been round the grave

with him. The young commander then raised Betha, and conjured her, by the exigency of the moment, to say what she wished to be done; but, considering what she had just said, he recommended her allowing him to send her and Benomi off directly to Worcester, where the royal Charles himself would be surety for their safeties.

"Not there, not there!" cried Benomi: "Betha, say not there!—if you love my soul dearer than my life, say not there!"

Betha could not give an instant to thought, nor could she understand the incoherencies of that poor child's various feelings; but they were too sacred at this juncture to be trifled with, and her response tremblingly repeated — "not there."

"Then it shall not be there," answered the cavalier; and turning to Gladstone, he added — "Could you take them to the herdsman-cottage amongst the hills, where I went with you in our march hither? Its remoteness would be their

safety, under any mischance." Betha could well comprehend that the cavalier's present duty would not allow him to be her personal protector any where; and, when the good surgeon replied in the affirmative to what his friend had asked, in the transport of her gratitude, she caught his hand, and kissed it.

The cavalier saw her terrors of the man he was removing her from, in the vehemence of this action; and while she added to it her implorings to himself, not to allow her to be left in any place a moment, where there was a chance of General Harrison setting a foot there; he repeated his assurance of the hills being a competent refuge; promising, that she should be removed thither that very hour; and that when the business of the night was over, she should see him, or hear of him from those who would obey all her future wishes with regard to her ultimate security. During this, he made a sign to the chaplain and to Gladstone, who instantly obeying, jointly turned the flag-stone flat on the

grave; and the former rapidly, but solemnly, uttered the last benediction over it. All being then done, the cavalier drew away the trembling mourners, who both clung to him even as to a protecting brother, and speeded their steps, by bearing Betha almost in his arms out of the church.

When she found herself within her chamber, and he had seated her on a chair, he informed her that Gladstone was gone to bring horses for her and Benomi; and he also told her to take with her whatever she might need for her comfort, though the burthen must be small; and then, even while she was weeping her thanks upon his hand, he added, gently, "He must now leave her to a better guardian than any human arm!" For the bugle sounded, that was to be the signal from his brother officer of the detachment being ready for his leading out. Betha did not answer, nor look up. The cavalier, throwing off his sable cloak, replaced his plumed morion-hat on his head, which, indeed, Benomi imme-

diately handed to him, after having, he thought unobservedly, kissed the white cockade under its plume. "Benomi," said the young soldier, receiving it with a new spring of attraction towards that extraordinary child, "I need not tell you to tenderly watch that sister sufferer of us both. I dare to call her so by the fellowship of sorrows; for I have tasted many, though you see me thus! — But I enjoin you to cheer her in your watching, with the assurance, that the prayers of the pure in heart must prevail, however contrary the answering events may seem; and that wherever your innocent steps and hers may be led, there will be the impregnable shield over them!"

"O may that shield cover him!" burst from Betha's heart, when she heard his receding steps descending the stairs. But she was not permitted any longer time to think of past or future. — Gladstone hurried in — the horses were at the garden gate; one, guided by a faithful old soldier, with a cushion buckled before him, whereon she was to be placed

within the shelter of his veteran arms;—Benomi was to have a like seat, secured by those of Gladstone. He observed, while telling this, that despatch being necessary, to enable him and the soldier to return without delay to their respective duties, the animals must be put to a speed that neither Betha nor Benomi could bear, riding singly; she therefore acquiesced in every disposition, and hastened to throw all that seemed needful for herself and dear companion, into her usual travelling bag; but her purse, and the precious contents of the casket (which she brought with her), being a few relics of her mother's love, and the fated packet of Gervase, she disposed them about her person; then wrapping herself and Benomi in their former grey-hooded mantles, she and he turned from that chamber of so many horrors; with something of the feeling in her breast, of a lone traveller, who gives a last glance to the desert, whose sands, by one gust, had overwhelmed his friends and foes, leaving him its barren and silent surface

alone. But Betha felt, with gratitude, she was not left alone: — Benomi was by her, and kind protectors near them both.

At the garden-door she saw the horses by the star-light. Gladstone lifted her to her seat on the one prepared for her, and the veteran, there, folding his arms and his cloak round her, every object was excluded from her eyes. In the next moment the surgeon was mounted himself, and Benomi springing lightly to his place before him, the horses proceeded with the common military pace towards the town-gate pointing westward — the direct opposite quarter to that where the renewed contest had begun. The sounds of war came on the wind, as Gladstone and the dragoon, having answered with the parole, passed the western barrier; then touching their good steeds with the heel, the animals charged over the ground as if a flying enemy were before them. Nor did they seem to draw breath, nor did their riders speak, till they cried "Halt!" and pulled up in front of a low dark building, in the cleft of a ravine, in the

very bosom of the Malvern hills. A light glimmered from a small window near the roof; and Gladstone calling aloud, " Foster-father, awake! I bring you friends," the casement opened, and a venerable head looked out, answering with a glad welcome. The next minute the door extended its little wicket wide as humble hospitality could spread it to receive them; and Betha and Benomi were intrusted to the care of the herds-man and his wife.

CHAP. XXIV.

During the remainder of that night, a suddenly-rising storm blew in whirlwinds round the hill tops of that little secluded vale. The tempest came from the westward, as if it brought all the howling blasts of the wide Atlantic on its wing; and it continued not merely that night, but through the whole of the succeeding day, and the night following, and the day after that, with such rage of sounds, that none, save its own uproar, could have been heard, had the whole artillery of England been at war in the valleys. In all that time Betha had not seen any thing of the cavalier, nor of Gladstone; neither had she heard from them, nor received any tidings of the fate of Upton. She dared not put a question for enquiry to the herdsman, because his foster-son had enjoined her not to hazard the poor

man's safety, by making him the instrument of satisfying her probable impatience for intelligence; and, on leaving her, the good surgeon had promised faithfully, that, when practicable, one or other of her friends would come to her; she therefore strove to abide, in hope of the best; and, indeed, put a severer restraint on her anxiety, because of Benomi's sharing it so extremely, that he often wanted to prevail with her to allow him to go out on the hills, in spite of the inclement weather, and try if he could see any thing towards the Upton road that might allay their suspense. Such exposure of his delicate frame, and with his recent wound, was not to be admitted; but the manner of his beseeching it was so earnest, she had no other way of preventing his daring the danger, even without her leave, than affecting to treat her own occasionally avowed impatience for news as perfectly unreasonable. Then Benomi either sate down meekly by her side, or retired to his own little dormitory in a loft above,

to discipline his heart in the way he had been used.

Thus passed even the third night after that of their arrival there; but on the morning of the fourth day, when the weather softened, and the flocks were able to quit their sheltered pens, the herdsman abruptly returned from the uplands, whither he had been leading his sheep; and, with an alarmed countenance, he whispered the dame, "Not to send her flax to market that day, should the huckster call; for he feared there had been sad doings Worcester way; — indeed, he had met a shepherd lad, who told him all the pasture land about it, was strown with dead bodies, and trees torn up by the roots, laid across the roads. In short," said the old man, "he told me, he had given drink to a poor dying soldier of some sort, that lay amongst the trodden-down branches of one of them, who said he had been there a day and a night, without a drop of water to cool his drouth; which he called a burning fire, crueller than the gunpowder that brought him to

his end; and then he told the lad, the young king had been worsted again."

Betha and Benomi happened to be in the little kitchen apartment of the old pair, when this was whispered by the man to his wife. Though he intended it only for her, they both heard it; and Betha's fears of what might have befallen her own generous friends, in such a catastrophe, were near overwhelming her into momentary insensibility, when she heard the dead fall of Benomi by her side. He was totally lifeless, to all appearance; and that appalling sight rallied her own strength, to strive to bear, and not to desert what might yet be demanded of her exertions, by sinking under the probable new trials now awaiting her. The herdsman, who was hale, though old, carried the insensible boy into the adjoining room, which was her chamber, and laid him on her bed; and there, after many fruitless attempts at his restoration, which drew streams of hopeless tears from the heart-struck Betha upon his death-chilled face, at last breath-

ing came, and gradual consciousness revived. When she saw this happy change, she thanked the dame for her kind service, and said, she might be then left alone with the child. The woman obeyed; for, indeed, Betha dared not allow any ear but her own to hear what might be the first words from his lips, on recovering from a swoon so occasioned. But when he looked up, and recognised who was leaning over him, he only drew a very deep sigh, and pressed her hand to his lips, and then to his flowing eyes. "Dear Benomi!" said she; but she could not proceed a word further, even to console him with a hope for the lives of those, she dreaded were now no more. He withdrew her hand from his face, and still holding it, softly answered, "O Betha, how you are troubled by me! But now I should be glad to be taken to my bed in the loft: — I think I should sleep, and be better then."

Betha was too comforted by this unexpected calmness, and too well reconciled to his not venturing a remark on the

tidings which had given his sensitive frame such a shock, to risk further discomposing herself and him, by any observation of hers on the appalling intelligence; therefore she gently summoned the herdsman again, to assist her invalid up the ladder-ascent into the loft, which was done immediately; and Benomi laying himself down on his pallet, soothingly called to Betha through the aperture (for it opened from the ceiling of her little room), "Not to think of him in her thoughts, nor to come and watch near him for some time, for he should be best alone."

And Betha, too, soon shut herself up in her chamber alone: for nothing more of the Worcester fight could be gathered, than what her simple host had told on his first entrance; and by the manner of the honest pair in answering her cautious enquiries, it appeared they knew nothing of either public cause, excepting that such existed; nor did they seem to have an idea that their foster-son was engaged on either side. To enlighten them on

any of these subjects, Betha could easily comprehend, might compromise their safeties, and perhaps her own—for any thing that could betray her to General Harrison filled her with dismay;—hence, she soon ceased all questions; and having once or twice tenderly visited Benomi, whom she always found tranquil, and as constantly declaring himself inclined to sleep, she shut her little room door, and remained alone with her despondent thoughts. But towards sun-set that evening, the dame tapped at the door, and, on Betha's opening it, she told her, a poor travelling shepherd-man wanted to speak with her, likely to beg charity, he asked so earnestly. While she was delivering her message, Betha saw the person she spoke of, standing within the outer apartment, dressed not unlike the old herdsman himself, in homely raiment; a rough woollen frock, belted round with a leathern thong, and a large cap of the same material flapping over his face and shoulders, as the custom was, to shield the wearer from the weather.

He carried a heavy staff in his hand, and bent, leaning on it; but when he perceived Betha look towards him, he advanced hastily to her door. She was retreating, alarmed; when, as he stood for an instant behind the old woman, he raised the front of his cap with one hand, and Betha recognised the face of the cavalier, pale and haggard, yet it was himself. She staggered back; but her momentarily-extended arms towards him, showed it was an emotion of surprised welcome. The good dame's insufficient sight discerned none of this silent language; and Betha, struggling for power of utterance, exclaimed, "Let him pass — I will hear what he has to say." The dame obeyed, and the cavalier entering, closed the door.

Betha then stood speechless; but there was joy in that bond on her faculties — the joy of seeing her protector alive, when her fears, during that day of dismal solitude, had figured him dead on the field, covered with ghastly wounds, or stretched amongst the slain, perishing for

a drop of water, and no hand near, like that of the poor shepherd boy's, to bring it to him. — The garb she beheld him in, she knew must be for disguise; but the change in his countenance proclaimed he had no prosperous tale to tell: still, he was there. — And though she could not utter her gratitude to the Almighty hand which had so preserved her preserver, while she leaned on the arm that supported her trembling steps to a seat, she smiled, and wept her pious thanksgiving. During this paroxysm of her emotions, the cavalier gazed silently on her beautiful face; but it was not its beauty that engaged his thoughts while looking on it; it was the innocence, the nobleness, which were written there. — When she became a little composed, he seated himself by her, and asked tenderly for Benomi. She answered in the same tone as she always did, whenever she spoke of him, that he had been much affected by the evil tidings of the day, but he was then asleep. "And when he wakes," she said, "the sight of you will

be life to him." She then briefly related to the cavalier the vague account they had received from the herdsman; and when she closed, apprehensively enquired after their other kind protector, his friend. He replied, that though Gladstone had received a slight wound in the early part of the fatal day of Worcester, he was otherwise well, and was now safe, in the same temporary asylum which contained their beloved master. He then proceeded to verify the report of the young shepherd; first briefly mentioning, that his little band had succeeded in driving Harrison back; but the triumph was short; for General Lambert was crossing the river at the very time, and bringing on an overwhelming force, nothing could then oppose the republicans' re-capture of Upton. He next described, though as succinctly as possible, to spare a woman's heart such fearful imagery, the immediate advance of Cromwell upon Worcester, and his attack of the town with his whole collected army. It ended, he told her, in the total extinction, for the

present time at least, of the royal hopes in England; for that the King, after proving himself in that day worthy to be the descendant of two such monarchs as the lion-hearted Richard and Henry of Navarre, shed tears with his blood on quitting the field where the deceptions of a regicide subject had armed his people against him — and uttered a vow to heaven, never to set foot in England again, till called to his throne by the contrition of his subjects; and that their hearts, and not their swords, should lead him to it. The cavalier added, that the rout of the royal army was complete; but it was as a mere handful overthrown by a host; and all who survived fled diversely, in various directions, for better safety. "I am here," said he, "though out of my way to my place of refuge, which is beyond sea; but I came here — not to assist you in your removal, dear lady; for now my agency would be injury; but — " and he paused — "to perform my promise, rather to myself than to you, that I would see you again,

and to take a last leave, perhaps, of one, whom—" and he paused again. "I would not be forgotten as a true friend, though an unhappy exile.—Betha, had I a sister, I should regard her as I do you!"

Betha's thoughts, at that moment, had wandered from him and from herself: her heart was trembling within her, yet she seemed to have heard only that part of his farewell which mentioned his place of exile. "You are going," said she, "to the land of Henry of Navarre!—There is a cavalier there—" She stopped, and turned pale, with inward apprehension of what she was doing; but recalling to herself that it was an act of justice now in her power, which might never occur again, she braced herself to proceed. "I have a precious deposit," resumed she, "which I would confide to you, to deliver with your own hands into those of the person to whom it is directed; but with this beseeching prayer," added she, with an imploring agitation which surprised him, "that he never make enquiry of any human being why it

did not reach him before!" Her auditor regarded her emotion and extraordinary injunction with a degree of interest new to himself; feeling, indeed, a strange anxiety to know who the cavalier was that appeared so much to interest her, and to whom the precious deposit she mentioned was to be conveyed; but before he asked the question, he solemnly promised, that wherever in the French dominions her friend was to be found, he would seek him, and religiously perform her commands.

"He is not my friend," returned she, hastily; "at least, he does not know me; but I honour him and his. And yet, I adjure you, by all your goodness to me, that you merely deliver to him the packet, and never reveal to him how it came into your trust." Saying this, she drew it, wrapped in the piece of black silk in which Gervase had enveloped it, from between the folds of her vest next her slender waist, where she had secured it with a bodkin at the time of her flight from Upton, and had kept it ever since.

And while with an unsteady hand she was taking off the old fragment of handkerchief, to deliver the contents to him in their own original envelope alone, he bent towards her, respect and devoted service in every feature of his face; and in looking up to him, she saw it wholly, for he had laid aside his herdsman's cap, and his disengaged luxuriantly-waving hair, though sorely war-stained, was again the only shadow over that noble but then grievously care-stricken countenance.

"It is not possible for me to receive this proof of such inestimable confidence in me," said he, "till you know that I am not the person you suppose me to be. Though introduced to Colonel Massey's little band by the title and name of Colonel Carless, I have no claim to either."

Betha started; but she did not return one fold back upon the packet. "Your real name," answered she, "cannot affect my confidence in you. You are my preserver, and the preserver of a child as

dear to me as my own life. I want no further pledge from him to whom I intrust this." And she put the packet, in its outward paper, into his hand.

It was then the cavalier's turn to start. He read the superscription — "For Sir Eustace de Matchelowe," — and his eye glanced with an expression of enquiring amazement on Betha, while he ejaculated — "This is my father!"

Betha uttered a half-smothered shriek at this disclosure, and covered her face with her hands, her frame shaking convulsively. He who was, indeed, no other than Arthur de Matchelowe, gazed at her with wonder, and as sudden a tremor on his own heart.

"What is there so fearful in my acknowledging myself the son of the person to whom this packet is addressed," said he, "and whom you have just told me you honour, that you are thus cruelly affected? I would not believe that my good name has already been blotted in my native land! Tell me, lady: — for we are a family who have many enemies,

and, alas! none more false to our characters, than some of my father's kindred."

Betha could not reply. Every word had redoubled her distress. She trembled even to look on him; for the consciousness of all she had heard her father say, both of his father and himself, was heavy on her; but more, far more, the conviction of the actual injury inflicted, the positive grief those devastated parents had sustained by the detention of their youngest child from them; and she sate, overwhelmed to the earth, before this their generous son, who, even though he knew her not but merely as a poor, unprotected daughter of the commonwealth, had saved her from insults worse than death.

After his few moments' pause, to allow her to speak, he again urged her: — "I conjure you, lady, answer me! I have not many minutes to spare from my duty to my unfortunate master, therefore let me not separate from you thus — perhaps for ever! Tell me, how I have offended

my father's honoured name, in your esteem?"

The voice in which he uttered this, carried a penetrating tone of tenderness and of anguish in it that pierced Betha to the soul. She felt it was an appeal to her justice, to her gratitude, even to the remorse that she could not but own to herself, her father's family owed to him; and (with a cry unto Heaven within her to give her strength to proceed) she uncovered her face. What their eyes then expressed to each other, the long, long life of after years never effaced! But in that moment, clasping her hands together, she exclaimed — "O! forgive!" and dropped her head upon his arm: for he had taken her folded hands in his, when his fixed gaze met her upward look, full of a supplicating agony that increased his astonishment, while it seemed to fasten his very soul to hers.

"Forgive!" returned he, — "what have I to forgive you? I would devote my life's last act, could it now serve you, to insure your peace and safety one

hour! And, that I have done it at all, will be some compensation for being again driven a fugitive from my father's land; but you will indeed leave a wound within me, no time can heal, if you do not say to me why you turned from the name I bear. I swear to you," added he, in a transport of honest vehemence, "by the pure spirit that warms this spotless hand to life!" and her hand was then clasped to his swelling bosom — "that deserved dishonour, never yet stained man or woman that bore it! No, no — though I say it of myself."

"I believe it," answered she, raising her head from his arm, though her face still bent down in deep humiliation on her breast; "but there may be anguish, — bitter, bitter anguish, — on hearing a name, — and the dishonour not lie on it." — She paused convulsively again; for she felt dishonour was a faint term for the stigma that might be awarded by the son of Eustace de Matchelowe to her father's name, when he should know, that, but for his timely arm, the living brother

he had long believed in his watery grave, would have been actually destroyed in his sight, by the ruffians her father had set over him. Restoration must be made! her conscience seemed to whisper her, for her father's soul, even should his earthly disgrace ensue, and herself die a banished creature from his presence, in consequence of her daring to make the late amends; but her choice now appeared to her to be between the life that is and that which is to come, and not to allow any rising weakness to swerve her from her resolve. She laid her trembling hand on Arthur's, in interruption of something he was beginning to say, and she gaspingly articulated — "You had a brother —" She stopped — for a pang, like the partition of soul and body, stifled further utterance, and her pale face sunk again upon her bosom.

"I have a brother," rejoined he. "I never had but one, and he is the precious solace of my revered parents, in this my eventful absence. No tongue could disparage that innocent child's name!"

Betha raised her head, gazing at him aghast, while he was speaking. When he ceased, she abruptly said — "Your only brother, you say? And he is with his parents?"

"He is," returned Arthur; "at least, he was a month ago."

Betha rose from her chair, and looking wildly around her, exclaimed — "Then who is he —?" but suddenly recollecting herself, by the flashing of a single thought — that if he who had been committed to her by her father as her young cousin, was indeed not he, there must be some other mystery connected with that boy, which she had now no right to run the risk of betraying, by a word; but comforted, at any rate, that her father was guiltless of the crime he had assumed, in his tale respecting his sequestration of that child from his exiled brother, she sunk again into her seat, dissolving into tears, and murmuring her devout thanksgiving, in the single words, "Thank God! thank God!"

Arthur could not but perceive there

was a mystery somewhere in all this; and he saw also, that if he pressed more than he had done for its elucidation, he should augment a distress, every discerned pang of which he would gladly have transferred to himself alone; therefore, observing that while she wept her emotions gradually subsided, he waited till she appeared sufficiently composed to hear him again, and then he gently intimated, that, whatever were her knowledge of his family, he should not seek to enquire further, nor indeed into any other circumstance that might possibly give her pain; but he added, that as she now knew who he was, he would confide an address to her, by which channel any commands from her might reach him on the British shore, for yet a fortnight to come. "It will be so long," said he, "ere I can be on my way to deliver this sacred deposit to my father. But should he wish to answer it, — and assuredly he will, — does it acquaint him, where his messenger may find the niece of the revered Mistress Woolnoth?"

Betha tremblingly replied, but with more evident self-possession than before, —"He will not answer it; — nor is it from me. One glance at its contents, will tell you, that, in some respects, only Heaven can answer it!"

Arthur obeyed her implied permission; and, indeed, receiving it as her immediate wish that he should know the extent of the trust reposed in him, he opened the packet as she concluded her seeming injunction to do so. The paper lying at the top, was the blotted scroll, superscribed with its atrocious purpose: —"Heavenly Judge!" cried he — "*the death-warrant of Charles Stuart!*"

"Yes," returned she, "and with it, several papers of a hallowed import to his unhappy family! It relieves me of a heavy charge, that you have them; but, I repeat, never let it be known, whether it was man or woman that restored them to you."

Arthur's thoughts might now be said to be all bound up in one — astonishment. Speechless, he looked at her and at the papers, but yet not unfolding any

other of them; asking himself, how it could have been possible that a packet of such evidently secret communication, and directed to his father, could have come into the keeping of a young maiden, the niece of a person of humble station; for so the damsels at the goldsmith's, had represented Dame Woolnoth to have been, from the accounts of the two commonwealth soldiers, who were her companions. But Arthur had pledged himself to this noble daughter of a lowly race, to breathe no further enquiry; and her manner too clearly proved there were some painful circumstances to her, connected with the possession of the packet. Perhaps, too, he resigned himself the more implicitly to that engagement, from a hope, that his father's recollection of the name of Woolnoth, might hereafter lead him to the sight of that endeared face again;— for the young De Matchelowe did indeed feel his ingenuous heart cling more and more to hers, whose agitated pulses he had so lately soothed into trust and temporary peace. He therefore gazed on

her as a guardian-angel would look on the beloved object of his charge on earth, which hereafter was to be his dearest companion in heaven; but in the energy with which, at last breaking his rapt silence, he was assuring her of his determined purpose to fulfil all her injunctions to the utmost, the open packet, still on his knee, being stirred, the warrant slipped from it on the ground. On immediately stooping to take it up, he saw the dark spots on the side that then fell upwards. The recent scenes through which the young soldier had passed, had rendered him too familiar with the origin of such stains. "What are these?" cried he, hastily unfolding it; "they are not ink drops! — I see its blots on the guilty paper elsewhere."

Betha shuddered — "The papers within will tell you. The warrant fell upon the scaffold, — and —"

She stopped: she could not finish the sentence; nor could Arthur reiterate its meaning in words, though he comprehended it all; and his eye glanced over

the horrible scroll. — "Yes!" cried he, turning his head from it, as if it had blasted the sight which had looked on it, but clenching it in his grasp, — "Well might their sacrilegious hands miswrite and misdate this murderous document! But the day and hour of that deed is before the Eternal Throne, and this blood will yet have the retribution to its cry; and the curse of the posterity of Cain be on those who did it!"

In the instant of his uttering this, a fearful mingling of sounds pierced his ear and his heart: Betha, with a shriek of dying horror, fell senseless at his feet; and a quivering cry, as of one also in the fainting throes of expiring nature, issued from the open loft above. In the latter he recognised the voice of Benomi; but a total stillness ensued. Arthur stood aghast. Had death's dire destructiveness followed him, even from the wide field of slaughter, to that quiet spot? But Betha was the first object he moved to succour. He raised her in his arms, and laying her on her own little couch,

called aloud on the herdsman's wife for her assistance; but the woman had gone out to the hills, to tell her husband of this shepherd-man's coming, and to know his pleasure for his entertainment. Arthur was then entirely left to the suggestions of his almost despair. In vain he bathed her face with water: still she appeared as if the vital spark had actually fled. At last he snatched her wildly to his breast, and carrying her into the outward air, laid her down upon the grass; where, chafing her hands and temples, and calling on her name, with frantic implorings for her to awake — as if the voice of agonized mortal woe could indeed arrest the parting soul — he at length felt the motionless body shiver in his folding arms, in which his hopeless anguish had again clasped her, and in a few moments more her eyes opened, and fixed on his face; nor did she withdraw them till she had struggled into power to speak. He was then bending breathlessly over her; his agitated and grateful heart — grateful to

Heaven for her life — overflowing in more than one large drop from his eyes.

"If you wish the wretched, and in this cause, blameless children of the guilty, to live," cried she, "you will recall that direful curse! Remember, the victim for all mankind! He blessed even his murderers — for he prayed for them."

Arthur was smitten in the soul. Was it then his malediction on the regicides, that had wrought this horror on her, almost to the crushing of her being? The conclusion was evident, that her father, whatever were his degree in life, had been one of them! And did not Arthur know, that the signatures of men high and low, even from the dregs of society, were associated on that blushing scroll? But he hurryingly answered, and from his heart too — feeling that his lips had infringed the Almighty prerogative — "I do, I do recall those words! I abhor myself for the unjust mercilessness that uttered them; — and I pray Heaven to forgive all, who may then have erred in

their judgment, — as, I trust, the cruel imprecation may be forgiven me!"

Betha bowed her head to his, while her eyes turned to the blue heavens above, and the spirit within her seemed then to look beyond that sublunary veil.

Arthur, not less awed in thought than herself, silently awaited her reply; but she did not make any. Renewed, however, in strength, and apparently by the nature of his response, she laid her hand gently on his arm, and raising herself, motioned to him to lead her back into the little dwelling.

CHAP. XXV.

IN less than a quarter of an hour afterwards, Arthur appeared from the door alone, with his herdsman's cap pulled low over his face, and his staff in his hand. He turned instantly into an opposite ravine, that pointed towards the western coast; and the straining eyes that looked after him, through the dim casement of the narrow window, saw him no more. Betha — for it was she who had started thither, to take one last glimpse of him, who she felt had been a shield of heaven to her — when she beheld only the long fern waving from the hill sides, between which he had passed away, dizzy with the sudden pang of the disappointment, she sunk into her chair, feebly exclaiming, "He is gone — for ever gone! Well might I say, *my house is now left unto me desolate*." And she wrung her

hands, as if then only she had acknowledged to herself, that an earthly protector was indeed necessary to her, under the accumulating afflictions of her saddening destiny; and that, of all others in the world, this, who had already proved the promptest and the kindest, and who, being of her own kindred, her heart could have cleaved to as to a brother — that even in the hour in which she knew this natural bond, and needed him most, his calamities, and her more really attainted name, separated them for ever.— "Yes, for ever!" she repeated. "I might cherish memory, with honour to all of his name, and be grateful to the son of Sir Eustace de Matchelowe: for neither father nor son have, in fact, done other than deeds of kindness to all of my father's house — while he!" — she shuddered, and her thoughts finished the sentence her tongue would not utter, shrinking from the words that would implicate her father's justice. — "O!" said she, internally, "they are generous, and may pardon him who took their home

from them — and they would pity his poor daughter, humbled to the earth; — but could they look on her, as belonging to them? No! no!" And breathing this, she believed too true response, her tears flowed, and with all the heart-wrung agony of contrition, though for transgressions not her own. So simply pure and acute was that horror of injuring the guiltless, that her recent withering consciousness of having seen her kindest protector for the last time, was totally lost in the sense of this more afflicting suffering. For even while quick recollections passed before her, the ungracious characters with which her father would have impressed her against this brother, and his noble son, whose conduct to herself, a friendless stranger, had proved the ablest confutation, — the fable that had been told her respecting Benomi's identity with the youngest child of that banished brother, — rushed upon her.

The scene of her father's questionable severities seemed then to change, and she bethought her, with new dismay, of what

a darkening list of inflicted evil the mystery of that unhappy boy might be full: for unhappy he was; and, she had certainly always thought, far more so than even the represented situation of the young Henry de Matchelowe, sad as it was, had appeared to warrant. — But when she found from Arthur that his brother had never been from his parents, then rose the vague imagery that Benomi's sorrows might really be of a blacker dye. And, indeed, when, on her recovery from her swoon, her unconscious kinsman had brought her back into her chamber; and after an agitated expression of his grief, that his last hour with her should have so wounded her feelings, he mentioned to her the sound of distress he had heard from Benomi above, she trembled; as if that cry, simultaneous with her own, had been from a presage within him, that she was to be no more to him what she had been. And while Arthur hastened up into the loft, for she found herself, in the moment, incapable of accompanying him, she felt a

strange distraction of emotions; as if the discovery she had made of that desolate child being no relation to her blood, had robbed her of the privilege of hovering over him with the close bosom-love she had done, and so cause his friendless state another deprivation. And thus were her anxious thoughts distilling their drops of even augmented tenderness for the nameless orphan, when Arthur returned from the little hovel dormitory, and described him to be in so sound a sleep, that he would not venture to disturb him, to bid him farewell, or to ask him any questions; adding, that he breathed gently, as if no longer disordered in his dreams; for there being no show of illness about him, he concluded some phantom of that sort must have occasioned the momentary sound of alarm.

This satisfied Betha then; and it did so even after Arthur had torn himself from her. — For it was to him like tearing himself from a bond on his honour, as well as rending his heart, to leave her thus surrounded by the forces of the

victor; amongst whom one of the chief commanders, was the especial object of her personal dread; and Arthur was too well aware of that man's reputation in warfare, not to know that should he discover her present asylum, neither it, nor any in the neighbourhood would be one for her; and therefore his last agitated adjuration was, that she should lose no safe opportunity of seeking her own home again, wherever it might be. But Benomi's cry had been one of real waking misery; and he was in no sleep when the cavalier had ascended to him; but he feared to trust himself to look up in his face, lest he should be tempted to put questions, the very utterance of which might bring heavier wretchedness upon his head. He had indeed overheard, though disjointedly, one or two brief communications that Arthur had made to Betha, and one remark of his had occasioned that responding sound of doleful meaning; and when he heard the cavalier go, that appeared the signal for every recollection of past griefs, and con-

sciousness of present agonizing suspense, to rush upon him, like fiends, struggling to seize and shake him from his purposed self-possession; yet, with all the strength of his almost unsettling reason, he combated these thronging thoughts, till, becoming unable to remain where he was, he rose from his bed, with the stilly movement of one fearing to arouse some slumbering misery, lurking even under its matted straw. He stole noiselessly down the steps, and instantly drawing near Betha, to whom he was attracted by all the clinging confidence of a child to a parent, young as she was — for her care over him had been more fostering than even a sister's — he tremulously uttered her name. She turned, and saw him, as he had first thrown himself on his bed, still in his clothes, and with a hectic on his cheek, accompanied by a strange eagerness of countenance that alarmed her.

"Betha," repeated he, "let me stay with you, — at least, till the cavalier comes back: but then, do not open your door to him till I get away."

"Dear child!" ejaculated she, folding the arm round him he had grasped, "he will not come back to us any more!" and, more affected by her own words, than she wished the poor forlorn one to see, she bent her face down.

Benomi felt her tears upon his cheek, and his heart began its strong pulses again; — for all human beings, of every age, when anxiety oppresses them, translate whatever they see into reference to them. And, even in the moment he received the intelligence that their protector was not to return to them, as a preservation from the weakness he dreaded in himself, of asking him questions, — he found he could not live under the apprehensions that were rending him, and falteringly and whisperingly he murmured in her ear — "Betha! the cavalier has told you many things;" then, more agitated, he added, "Tell them all to me; but do not ask me any wherefore afterwards."

Distressed by this, and embarrassed, for she now perceived he must have over-

heard some part of the conversation, and not being able to conjecture which, though her veins chilled with a sudden idea that it might be the very denunciation which had struck her to the soul, she answered in a surprise of emotion nearly equal to his, with something evasive, which she meant to be soothing.

But his suspense had been too rackingly wrought up, to be so appeased: he broke from her, crying out, "It is well! it is well!" And motioning to her not to follow him, hurried up the slight steps again to his loft.

It had no door to close down on the top of that ladder-stair, so she heard him throw himself down once more on his bed of sorrow; but not now to lie still as he was wont, resigned under sickness or sadness; he tossed from side to side, rustling the straw under him as if he could find no place whereon to rest his mind-harassed frame. At last, when evening drew on, and she was bringing in her lighted lamp from the kitchen of the dame (who, with her husband, had

expressed regret at the poor herdsman's being gone ere they returned), she thought she heard moans from the little chamber above. Listening, she found it was true; and no longer being able to bear her anxiety, she ventured to infringe Benomi's injunction (for, young as he was, she always respected his slightest intimations), and ascending into his loft, approached his low bed. It was on the floor. He started up in it, at sight of her and the light she held, and looking wildly at her, exclaimed, "Don't come here, Betha: — you are not safe; — they are all about me. See! see!"

"Who?" asked she in dismay, beginning to dread that his intellects were really wandering.

He bent forward, as if to whisper her, but gazing round the place, as if after some moving object, and with a countenance the colour of death, he answered — "The men that cut off my father's head! — and they have taken off my brother Charles's too; and now they come for mine. Look, how they glare on me!

—that is Felton!—O save me!——" And springing from his pallet, he threw himself franticly on her bosom.

She was almost incapable of sustaining even his slight weight, under the tremour that shook him: every feature seemed convulsed, and his limbs shivered, as if seized by paralysis. Her own mind became in an aghast amazement at what she had just heard. It was certainly uttered under a paroxysm of manifest delirium of some kind; but there seemed much probability, that the ground from which he spoke was a truth—indeed, that he was the infant son of the decapitated king, the account of whose innocent grief, when taking his last farewell of the royal sufferer, had cost her so many shuddering pangs,—and many crowding recollections of circumstances since, made it appear more apparent: in short, that one idea, seemed to solve every before inexplicable mystery about the unhappy child. Thinking thus, her first impulse was to assuage the consuming anguish which had now burst forth, by satisfying,

to the utmost of her power, the torturing, because suppressed anxiety, she readily comprehended had occasioned what she saw. "Benomi," said she, still disguising her suspicion of who he really was, "no harm is near you — nor any near those you love and honour. The young Charles is safe — no wicked men dare touch him; — and Felton is dead, you know."

The boy looked wistfully in her face, still trembling within her clasping arms. "Are you quite sure? Were they not here?"

"No one has been here, to bring evil to you, nor to any you wish well to, my Benomi!" gently answered she.

"O!" returned he, "I thought I saw such horrors!" and he put his hand on his forehead.

"Do not think of them at all, now," interrupted she, pressing her lips to his burning brow: "they were only a hurried dream, from the sad fever I feel in this dear head."

"But not all a dream?" timidly asked

he. "Surely the cavalier was here,—and I heard him say terrible things!"

Betha instantly answered, that he had indeed been there; but if he brought confirmation of the ill news respecting the general success of the royal cause, he also told her, what she had already said, that the young Charles Stuart was safe. On this repeated assurance, the poor child burst into a flood of tears, and still leaning on her bosom, faintly articulated —"God is good!" Then, after a short struggle with his more subsiding emotions, he added, with greater firmness— "O! Betha, I do not quite know what those horrors made me say;—but you must never tell it to any body. If I had had my senses, I never would have given utterance to such words! But he will not believe that!"

"Who would not believe you?" asked she; but not waiting for reply, she tenderly rejoined, "there is no being that lives, Benomi, to whom I would repeat what you would wish me to hold in confidence."

"Then," returned he, in a lowered

voice, shrinking into her bosom, "I fear Geoffrey Baldry most. For he told me, that if I ever breathed a word of such things, I should have chains put on my wrists and ancles, and be shut up, during the commonwealth's pleasure, in the dark dungeon where poor Sir Walter Raleigh lived so many years, and never saw the light of day; and then, he said, that in like manner as my grandfather James Stuart had taken him out to cut off his head, so in due time I should be taken out. But what am I saying now?" — cried he, interrupting himself with almost a shriek. — "Forget, forget it, Betha; — or do not believe me. O! have mercy on me, Heaven!" and with that, he threw himself back from her arms upon his bed.

She was now nearly overwhelmed herself, by this appalling reference to her father's tyranny over his helplessness; and wanting no further evidence than the scene before her, that it was indeed the unhappy, friendless orphan of the fallen and decapitated monarch, she beheld thus oppressed, and trampled down

in his filial sorrows by her own parent, she knelt down by the side of his bed, and clasped her wringing hands over him. — "Beloved — honoured child!" cried she, "believe that the wretched daughter of him who has caused you any of the pangs you speak of, could easier die than betray a word that you have now uttered! If I do understand who you are, — it has not been your intention, but circumstances which have revealed it to me, — and as Heaven can now be my only comforter, my life shall be devoted to be yours! My dear, dear Benomi, look on me!—or, may I say, my honoured prince?" The last adjuration was expressed in a burst of emotion, though in a half-smothered voice, while she pressed his icy hand to her lips.

He started up from his pillow at this, and throwing his arms around her, tremulously exclaimed, "No, no! Let me be always your Benomi! God has, indeed, given you to me in the place of the dear Betha they took from me — and I will hide nothing from you!"

Tears finished the sentence; and while Betha's flowed also, she soothingly replied — "Then not now, my Benomi!" and persuading him to lie down and compose himself to rest, she would have promised to abide by his side, watching, until morning; but that his tenderness would not consent to, though she saw his spirits were in too infirm a state to be left alone: therefore, bringing her own little paillasse, she spread it not far from his, and, as she laid her head upon her pillow, she had the consolation to see him smile, and, softly blessing her, turn his face to rest. Soon after, she heard, by his gentle breathings, that nature's balmy nurse had indeed shed her healing influences over him.

CHAP. XXVI.

WHEN the morning came, it found the young prince in so sweet and profound a sleep on his bed of straw, that Betha moved away without disturbing him, and by the time she heard him stir above, she had prepared some proper nourishment for his refreshment, which he immediately took on her rejoining him; and throughout the whole of the day he refused none of the medicinal simples which the experienced old woman brought forth to Betha, as certain restoratives from feverish symptoms: indeed, in all things, he acted with the docility of an obedient child, now hanging with a redoubled principle of grateful adhesion to his beloved protectress. — In short, there was something in his young heart which made him feel, that having reposed his secret with her, — a secret, which to

him was even as the substance of his soul, being the sum of all his earthly thoughts, — that she had become to him even as part of himself; and, in fact, her watching care and tender soothings through that day and the next, ere he was aware, drew every long-buried memory from the depths of that, till then, terror-locked bosom. While so unburthening his loaded heart, he told her that in doing it, he was putting his life into her hands; and that he felt it was even surer to him in that keeping than within the bond of his own lips; for his oppressed spirit was always struggling to break out; and in that case the safety of others might be involved as well as his own. Now he had spoken his wrongs to a breast that pitied him, and would be faithful; and as he felt the very act of his confidence, and her consolations, strengthening even his life, he could not but consider it a gracious sign that the Almighty Father, who had blessed the pouring out of David's soul, in like manner, to the son of one who persecuted

him, was not displeased with his trust in her.

Betha could have shed burning tears at this innocent remark, so full of a truth he did not mean should pain her; but she checked them, and gave the whole force of the pang within to the vow she immediately uttered, to be faithful, as Jonathan was to David, to him; and, instantly, she ratified the unasked solemn pledge, by kissing a little Testament that lay on the pillow of Benomi (for so he entreated to be called by her at all times). He then clasped it to his own lips — "Betha," said he, "*the just made perfect*, look upon us now, — and one of them blesses thee for this! Ah, little did he think, when his tears dropped on it, and he gave it to my sister, that when she should be taken from me, it would receive such a vow as this — to give me a sister again! Dear, dear Betha!" and her hand was then pressed to his humid eyes.

That little Testament was indeed the relic he had always carried, hidden in his

bosom; and never until that day had he shown it to Betha. It was the precious bequest that Charles, in his last separation from his children, put into the hand of his daughter, enjoining her, when she should see her mother, to give it to her, to be her sure comfort, as it had been his! But she never was allowed to see that widowed parent again; and when that young mourner's own hour of death came, she gave the sacred little book to her beloved brother, then to be bereaved of all visible consolation, except what it would afford. She placed it on his heart, when her lips for the last time touched his in this life, and it never afterwards was from his personal possession; for he secreted it, and retained it, under every change of place and circumstance, mostly indeed carrying it in his breast. Within the first leaf, the name of the late King was written by his own hand, and these two lines beneath it: —

> "Persecuted, but not forsaken!" — 2 Cor. iv. 9.
> "He shall redeem my soul." — Ps. lxxii. 14.

This leaf was marked with the traces of many tears, and Benomi said, they were his and his beloved sister's. Indeed, there seemed to be nothing in his heart that he could withhold from revealing to her, whom he now loved to call the deserved sharer of his fondest thoughts with his "sainted Beta" — for that was the name his childhood had given to his sister, and by the near affinity to it, that of Betha's was as the same, dear to him. And thus, by degrees, this second object of his fraternal love, learnt from his recollecting tenderness the whole sad history of the first.

It told that after the fatal thirtieth of January, he, then only nine years of age, and his sister Elizabeth, who (though beautiful and sensible as loveliest womanhood) was scarcely thirteen, were taken away from the respectable charge which had treated them kindly during the dismal days of their father's trial, and sent to a far different sort of guardianship. In short, when the end of the dreadful day was proclaimed to them,

they were also informed that his death had sunk them beneath the lowest of the people; for a deposed king and his disinherited family had no place on earth, but what charity might bestow; that the race of a tyrant so little deserved mercy, their lives would be taken by the populace if they were not removed clandestinely. Hence they were carried away, in a secret manner, even to the saddest of all places to them, to Carisbrook Castle, in the Isle of Wight, to be trained there into subjection and obedience. And then he told how his sister was made to wait upon the wife and daughters of the deputy-warder, till she often fainted in the midst of her rigorous labours, or swooned unto death, under the taunting derisions with which they commanded the daughter of Charles Stuart. And, for her brother, they laughed, while telling her that it was sport to see a prince become a very slave to the meanest serving-man in their household! — "But that was nothing to me!" said the agitated relater. "It was the sight of her

indignities, that wrought me often to desperation, and upbraidings of their cruelty, and then I was ordered to be stricken in her sight. O! that bowed my noble sister's soul to the ground, and she knelt before the lackey of those women, to spare her brother another blow; for the first had felled me senseless. But what of that now? The pang is over with her!—and, since then, no injury on myself has moved my soul beyond the holy calm her death brought with it!"

And so it had been with that extraordinary child; considering for himself nothing, it was only through the breasts of his persecuted kindred, that his soul-devoted resignation could afterwards be shaken; yet when he now spoke of the sufferings of his sister, the recollection started the hot drops of indignation on his brow, and his cheek flamed: "But it is over!" repeated he: "she became ill: Heaven laid its gentle hand on her, that man's merciless bondage might be taken away! And my dear sister was sent to a

melancholy spot for the recovery of her health, and she became worse; but I shall always bless the effect of even that devised torture; for those last days with her brought me to know the comfort that comes from the orphan's only Father."

The royal child then proceeded, in broken but most heart-rending details, with the narrative of her sufferings, in the very apartments where their betrayed parent had been imprisoned, and from a window of which he had once attempted to escape. And, though her jailers called it her hospital, every severity was exercised over her which could neutralise the medical means used for her cure. While she was there, it was only by night that her brother ever saw her, and then it was by stealth, when he stole to her by clambering amongst the ivies into her chamber window: but conversation was not their object; they read together out of the holy book their father had bequeathed — but one morning, by daybreak, an accident discovered the young prince descending from his sister's win-

dow, and he was instantly carried before the deputy-warden for punishment.—After this, she was not left to die in peace. And because she had evinced comfort in occupying the room where her father had been, she was dragged from it, to pass her last hours in a yet more desolate apartment, overlooking the one she had left, there to expire, as if in foretaste of her banished doom in heaven. But, blessed be the Divine Justice, it judges not as men would have it. Her brother's sentence, meanwhile, was a whole night's solitary confinement in the high old well-tower on the Saxon mount, where, wrought into despair by his grievous thoughts, and terror-struck with the darkness, and the shrieking of the owls around him, he suddenly found himself close to the well edge, of many hundred feet deep,—and, for a moment, he put his foot there, to cast himself in, and be rid of life and his fears together. "But," said he, shuddering, "my sister had told me to pray when the evil one tempted me; and surely

that was a time he did! — and I prayed, flinging myself on the ground, and I crawled away from the well's brink; and still I prayed to my heavenly Father till I fell asleep; and then day dawned, and I was frightened no more."

But his separation from his sister was rigorously continued, except for a few minutes each day; and every hour increased her illness, which was rapid consumption. No trouble, indeed, was taken to avert its symptoms, and no care provided for her wants. In short, when she became incapable of serving herself, she might have perished in her bed unrecollected (for even then they would not allow her brother to abide by her) had it not been for a poor negress servant in the castle, who had evinced the same humanity to the outraged and neglected monarch on the same spot.

"But," continued the weeping narrator, "she was not allowed to let me see my dear sister, when her happy spirit was leaving this world, to go to our beloved father; for that our cruel task-

masters knew would make me happy too, even in my bitter sorrow. But I saw her afterwards in her coffin; and, indeed, she seemed to smile on me, and her eyes to gleam on me under their half-closed lids. I kissed her; but, oh! it was so cold! — to this hour I feel it here, whenever I think of it!" and he shivered while he put his hand upon his breast. — "It seemed, Betha, as if I had put my lips upon her marble tomb. But she had no marble tomb. When she was to be buried, the good negress knelt, and prayed to her cruel lady, that I might be permitted to go with her, *when the body should be put in the earth.* That was the word; for she was to have no rite read over her; and she was to be carried to her grave in darkness; and none were to be present but those who were to lay her there — and the negress, who was to see it done — and myself; but I had the grief of many mourners in my poor heart. However, it was to be in a church; and that alone was solace to me: for some new soldiers, just come

to the castle, had told me, she was to be thrown into the sea!"

He broke off abruptly, and paused for some time before he could proceed: indeed, many were the interruptions of failing voice, or flowing tears, that made long intervals during this relation and that which succeeded it. But the sum of his little narrative was, that in the dead of night a covered cart carried the remains of the young princess to the little church of Newport, where a grave was prepared underneath the flag-stone nearest to the altar. Her brother and the negress had sate by the coffin in the cart, and, by the light of a single lantern, followed it to its last bed. At this part of the relation, Betha could well understand the cause of his extraordinary emotions in the church at Upton, when similar gloom and secresy accompanied her revered monitress to her grave. When the coffin of the princess was set down, without pall or other reverent appendage, and her brother clung to it as if her it contained could still be sensible to his em-

brace, one of the men was beginning to read the roughly cut inscription on its lid, when the negress put her hand on his lips—"It is enough," said she; "we have no Christian benison here! Let us have no other language." The man, not meaning offence, did not answer; and even respectfully performed his task of raising the young prince from the coffin, that it might be lowered to its place. The afflicted brother heard it put into the ground, and he heard no more.

When he recovered to consciousness, he was in a lone hut on the sea shore, with Tyrrell and Felton standing over him — the two soldiers before-mentioned, and who had been sent to Carisbrook Castle to bring him privately away, in consequence of a new disposition of certain rulers concerning him. That same night, therefore, they proceeded on their commission; and taking him off in a boat to a small vessel in waiting, set out to sea. But the end of his voyage was the Tower of London; and into it he was con-

ducted in the same secret manner, being brought in under dusk, and lodged in a little vaulted chamber, where, it was the pleasure of those men to tell him, the two royal brothers of the house of York had slept their last. And, indeed, on the very night, some months afterwards, in which the ruffians appeared suddenly in his room to remove him to Matchelowe Court by the order of Geoffrey Baldry, they announced their errand to be a mandate from the Parliament, to lay his breathless corse by the side of those children, under the steps of the winding staircase.

"But that was no menace to me," continued Benomi. "Those who had charge of me did not show me any thing in this life worth valuing it for. I never saw any thing but the walls of that sad room, and the faces of those men who were my jailers, and now and then Geoffrey Baldry;—so death would have been a release to me; — and yet to be murdered was a cruel thought! However, they had made this world's existence so bitter to me, I should not have started from their swords

any how; it was their taunts, their horrible exultings in the past, that pierced me, and often drove me nearly mad. But I will not say what they said and did! They are dead,—and may Heaven pardon their foul, foul crimes!"

When the young Henry Stuart uttered this, his memory was full of the many boasts Felton had made, of having knocked down a soldier on guard, for wishing "God's comfort" to the King, on his being led out from condemnation; and also, that he had himself brought the ropes for the iron pulleys on the scaffold, to have forced the unhappy monarch to the block, had he showed any resistance. But the royal Charles yielded them no such excuse for the meditated insult, and his spirit passed away, resigned to the mortal blow, meekly into the presence of Him who gave it being. Tyrrell, too, was on the scaffold, to perform his share in the scene; and he already had been deep as his comrade in causeless outrage. But who, then, was clear of treading on the fallen, — of bending the bruised reed,

— of piercing the broken heart? In short, it was revolution, not reformation! The scene at Whitehall had no principle with that at Runnymede; and old Thames, for a while, ran blood for it. But no more. —

Betha was too justly impressed with the fearful import of all she now heard, not to seize the opportunity, at every risk to herself, which she believed still in her power, of rescuing this last intended victim; and while she declared her grateful sense, to him, of the tenderness with which he had refrained from reproaching her father's name, she urged the necessity, she nevertheless saw, not to trust his republican prejudices, and the influence of even sterner men, with such a charge again. And relating the means in her hands, by the direction the cavalier had left with her, which could summon him in a day to her side, she implored the otherwise defenceless prince to allow her to call their recent protector to a duty that would be his happiness to

fulfil, and so restore him in safety to the arms of his now only parent.

Here the royal child's filial feelings did, indeed, break forth:—"My mother!—O, my mother!" cried he, wringing his hands; "but no—it must not be! Never persuade me to that again, Betha;—for should I be weak, and do it, I should give up my soul for ever;—for I know they would keep to their cruel purpose,—and my father, who loved him, would even turn away his pity from me in the judgment-day, for my wicked selfishness!"

A few questions explained to Betha, that the person referred to in this apparently incoherent reply was Bishop Juxton, whom the commonwealth-governors still held a prisoner somewhere, and that Geoffrey Baldry had been made their organ to enforce on the young Henry, that should he ever attempt to escape, or to hold any communication with his own family, in that hour the bishop's early instructions to him should be considered responsible for all, and the old man be

instantly put to death by way of a signal example. Betha had of late been too truly informed of her father's character, to doubt his steadiness in obeying such resolves, if brought to the point; and said no more to her beloved Benomi, to overthrow a resolution she deemed the just one — though so trying to the virtue of a young creature, who had no friend on earth but her feeble self, to sustain him in the rending sacrifice.

The next morning, an occasion occurred to put both him and her to the test. A courier, passing from General Fleetwood's division of the army, then lying in the rear of the Malvern hills, towards London, turned into the dell where the herdsman's dwelling stood, to ask for a little refreshment. He was a kinsman of the dame, and being invited in to breakfast more conveniently, he complied, and alighted. When the anxious prince learnt what the stranger was, he suggested to Betha making him the bearer of a short despatch to her father, containing an intimation of what

had befallen her, and, above all, the assurance, that Benomi was with her, and ready to follow her steps wherever he might direct. Betha's own fears were eager to get out of the reach of General Harrison; and she fully comprehended the discretion, for her charge's sake, of what he had advised. She therefore called in the herdsman's wife, and finding that the courier was an honest-minded soldier, and no sanguinary partisan, and that he was proceeding at once to his destination, without touching at any other military quarter, she did not hesitate a moment; but wrote the sort of letter to her father which would give him every needful information respecting her, without betraying who she was, should the packet fall into other possession. The good woman took it from her, and committed it in strict trust to her kinsman, to be delivered into President Baldry's own hand, who, she said, would handsomely reward him accordingly.

CHAP. XXVII.

The whole of that quarter of England was astir day and night, being more like a vast camp guarding fortresses, than a tract of country possessed by its own people. Military appeared every where, and particular parties were out, in open pursuit or secret search of the king and his partisans; while placards were posted up in all places, offering a reward for the capture of each cavalier, according to his estimated importance to the royal cause. But, hitherto, the king, and some of his most especial friends, had baffled the efforts of their enemies to discover them; and Arthur de Matchelowe, along with others, had twice traversed the scene of inquisition, since he parted with Betha at the herdsman's hut. At last, having passed through the divers perils of Boscobell wood, with his closely-beleagered

master, and made the harassing tour with him, which led him to a temporary refuge at Lime in Dorsetshire, where other fugitives of illustrious name had already assembled, every means were devised to facilitate the monarch's and his hunted party's immediate embarkation. But Arthur was not to be one of them. Charles laid a new commission on him, in proof of his confidence in the signal discretion and gallantry which had so well executed the first. That errand had been a sacred trust from the widowed queen to her recently-anointed son — this was to be a boon to that tender mother in return.

Charles determined, that if it were possible for stratagem, gold, and persevering resolution to effect his purpose, that his young brother Henry should be rescued from the hands of the regicides, and brought to his mother's arms in France. He selected the firm and brave heir of the always faithful De Matchelowes for the enterprise; and Arthur zealously undertook it at all risks, going forward, confident in the motto the old

soldiers had buckled on his heart — *Dieu et mon Droit.* One of the fugitives, who joined the king at Lime, had given him an idea that the prince was confined in some private prison in the neighbourhood of London; and he furnished Arthur, in case of need, with a letter to a brave ex-commander of the commonwealth, who, he knew, was too honest a man not to wish all of the unfortunate monarch's race safe out of the land.

Thus credentialed, Arthur de Matchelowe disposed his own military harness to look more in character with one of the freebooting volunteers then roaming the country, than a regular soldier on either side of the contest; and taking a course towards London, he sped on, — travelling by night, but sheltering in broad day in some wood, or remote hovel of the poorest order of peasantry. Thus, one day, having taken his usual time of rest in one of the subterraneous recesses which line some of the hills that divide the midland counties of England, he was awakened by the sound of voices near

him. In short, similar circumstances had brought two very different order of men, though of former accidental acquaintance, into the outward vault, it might be called, of the same cavern; and from Arthur's place of bivouac, a small cave farther inward, he found, by their discourse, that they were both commonwealth soldiers; but the one had been an impressed man, and was going on furlough, in consequence of the late final business at Worcester, to see his own friends. The other seemed plunder's very champion; and, liberal of his confidence as of his character, he was proudly recounting his exploits to his more silent companion, when a burst of loud laughter from the noisy narrator roused Arthur from his sleep.

It was Tyrrell's self, who, with every wanton jest that the half-inebriated merriment of a ruthless contemner of humanity could devise, depicted the horrors of the chamber of death which he and his equally merciless compeer had inflicted at the goldsmith's house. And

then, with a roar of boisterous exultation, he boasted, that the reputed serving-lad his better aim had despatched to the nether world, was no less a personage than the beheaded king's youngest son, whom he and Felton had often made keep to his new calling, and hold their stirrups when they mounted. However, he cursed the whim of the parliament-rulers, who, taking panic at some recent escapes from the Tower during the last executions there, had chosen to despatch their boy-prisoner thence, and to load him and his comrade with so unfair a responsibility. "So," cried the ruffian, "I grew tired of it; — and when he was likely to become his brother Charles's prize, my trigger made short work of it. Here, then, I am, — as good a man as Bradshawe, or Cromwell, or my master that was, Geoffrey Baldry; — and have as fair a right to a slice of the common-wealth as any of them; — though I fancy they would now sooner give me a lift to the gallows. For I hear there is a hue-and-cry for the boy amongst them, to

knock him on the head, some way or other, I have no doubt; — but as they will have it in their own style, I dare not say I have done it, till I can proclaim it as proudly as the best of them. And so I will, when it is my luck to catch hold of that pretty mistress, Geoffrey's daughter, whom I can guess where to find when I get back into Worcestershire; and then I shall have my ransom in my hands, for sending the young scape-goat, her quondam page, to the other side of the Styx without their warrant!"

The soldier to whom this was addressed made few remarks in reply; but those few showed he had no sympathy with him who told the narrative; and not long afterwards they separated — Tyrrell, indeed, with a laugh of contempt at the plain-spoken dissent the other gave to his present remorseless exultation — but turning back, with a ferocious seriousness, just as he had come to the mouth of the cavern, he said — "Cant is well in its place; but if I hear, Burnet, when I come to Matche-

lowe Court with my bride in my arms, that you have broached one tittle of this to my intended father-in-law, I swear by a halter that has never yet slipped its noose, to hang up the hoary pensioner, your father, on the old maypole there, till he is as clean a scare-crow as the knight's popinjay!" And with this menace the savage disappeared.

The disclosures in this dialogue had so amazed Arthur de Matchelowe, and absorbed his faculties in astonishment, that he betrayed no sign to the speakers of there being a third in the audience. But as soon as Tyrrell seemed absolutely gone, the young cavalier came forward, surprising the soldier in his turn by the sight of another inmate. A few words, however, revealed to him that he and his companion had not only been overheard, but that the undesigned listener was the son of his father the pensioner's former master, Sir Eustace de Matchelowe. Indeed, Arthur had known Walter Burnet when a boy; and the young man being some years older than his

benefactor's son, he, too, remembered him, when thus recognised, with yet more marking distinctness. In short, they no sooner met and spoke, than they became as assured of each other's identity as if they had only parted yesterday. Past recollections reminded Arthur that Walter had been a particularly respected youth for his general probity; and his lately-declared sentiments, which had drawn such a deriding threat from Tyrrell, were sufficient proof that he was not altered. Therefore, it was not long before Arthur confided to him his present views, in remaining in the country after the king's second departure; offering him the satisfaction of exchanging an enforced enlistment, for a voluntary service; and so being his assistant in the proposed perilous enterprise.

Burnet's honest countenance was all in a glow. It never had been the fashion of Englishmen, whatever their relative degrees, to drop at each other's feet in acknowledgment of conferred honour or obligation; nor was it so in the present

instance: but when Arthur gave his hand to Walter in bond of their mutual fidelity in the affair, Walter grasped it firmly, and dashing a tear from his eye, swore, from that hour, to be his and the Stuart's loyal soldier.

They then started back to the Severn shore, travelling night and day to the Malvern-dell; for there Arthur hoped to still find Betha, and the precious companion of her seclusion. For since he understood that brave child was the very Henry Stuart himself, what had appeared extraordinary in him, now seemed only natural; the graceful dignity of his youthful mien, combined with his occasional shows of inexplicable griefs, proving his indeed individuality to be what Tyrrell had averred. But that the gentle, the noble, the endearing Betha, was the daughter of Geoffrey Baldry, his father's perfidious brother, was so appalling a discovery, that it brought a train of other thoughts than the main object of his enterprise into the mind of her kinsman. However, he speeded on; and

the more rapidly impelled, too, to get before the meditated insolence of her father's servant; who had declared, that all suitors had equal pretensions on the levelled ground of a commonwealth! And, with the double motive of restoring the young prince to safety and the bosom of his family, and of rescuing Betha from the threatened violence of so base a hand, after an interval of many, many days, he re-entered the green little defile again. But the cottage now contained no other inhabitants than the herdsman and his wife; and the account they gave of their former guests, was, first, a simple narrative of the boy's illness; then of the letter, which the young lady sent by her hostess's kinsman to President Baldry; and, lastly, of the arrival, two days afterwards, of a person coming from the lady's father, who, having met the courier, learned to whom his different despatches were addressed; and, showing his authority to become master of that for Geoffrey, he took it,

and, proceeding at once to the dell, presented his own proofs of authority to Betha. The result was, she and her young companion instantly went away with him; and as they had been gone some days, the good woman did not doubt they were pretty far on their journey towards London, which, she had understood, was the object of their destination.

To Geoffrey Baldry's city mansion, or to Matchelowe Court, in search of the youthful captive, now in his fetters again, Arthur and his faithful follower turned their determined faces. "Home of my fathers!" sighed he to himself, "I come to you a banished man! entering by stealth the possession of another, where, till now, all of my name maintained their presence in reverence and honour! — And how is it? — A stranger hath not done this wrong — but my own father's brother! O Geoffrey! Heaven pardon thee, for setting such a bar of division between his race and thine! And yet,

for his blameless daughter's sake, it were bliss to show how I could forgive her father, were I the only sufferer; — but as it is, Providence be my guide!" And after this internal adjuration, he and his comrade rode on with silent haste.

CHAP. XXVIII.

Cromwell had pronounced his complete overthrow of the young king at Worcester, to be "a crowning victory." Those were the very words he used in his announcement of it to the parliament rulers; and the impression made on them all had but one import, though it affected them variously. They fully comprehended that he expected, as the just reward for his having so entirely extinguished the Stuarts' hopes, to be proclaimed the perpetual Lord of the Commonwealth, with all its pomps and consequences. Those consequences made some demur, and others refuse assent.—Amongst the latter, indeed, at their head, was Bradshawe; and his party being strong and zealous, the discussions on the question were very stormy. The chief upholder of Cromwell's pre-

sent dignity, was the young and handsome Lord Falconberg, a wild-brained enthusiast in the late changes; and full of a headlong ambitious talent, burning to distinguish itself in some way beyond all who had ever gone before him; and therefore he eagerly became the first mover in a decree from "the senate and people of England," that was to constitute the idol of the commonwealth its perpetual dictator. Perhaps, indeed, the flame of his zeal was the more excited by the personal charms and impelling encouragements of Cromwell's most beautiful daughter, Mariam, who, from the first hour in which she beheld this rich and romantic lord, thought no more of Geoffrey Baldry, and his city wealth and honours. In short, soon understanding each other, they became as one will; determined to lay the foundation of Oliver's final "crowning" aggrandisement, and grace its first act by the celebration of their own marriage. Geoffrey Baldry was speedily made sensible of all this; while he met what he consi-

dered insult, added to the faithlessness of the lady and the perfidy of the father, when the young lord came to him, to demand that the boy, Stuart, should be delivered to his custody, to hold in undisputed surveillance, until the arrival of the victor himself, over the last pretender of the name, should appoint his future safe keeping. Geoffrey refused peremptorily; and alarmed, lest accident should betray the asylum into which he had sent the young prince, and his daughter, in Worcestershire (then little anticipating the events that took place there), he lost no time in despatching one of the most trusty officers of his household towards Arelby; where he did not doubt the party had been long arrived, and that only the belligerent circumstances of the country had prevented him hearing so. And his orders were, with letters to that purpose to Mildred and to Tyrrell, to bring them all securely back again to Matchelowe Court. That messenger chanced to meet the courier that bore Betha's letter to her

father, and the result has been mentioned.

During their journey homeward, Geoffrey went like a troubled spirit, backwards and forwards, between West Cheap and Matchelowe Court, in a constant chafe with the daily vexations that occurred; but swelling with the pride of his power, and consequently of his revenge, should good fortune again restore his prisoner to his hands. For Bradshawe, having received intelligence of the negotiation Falconberg had opened with Baldry in behalf of Cromwell, to have the boy delivered to him, sent also, and in rather an offensive tone likewise, requiring that the prisoner in question should instantly be restored to his personal charge, in right of his being president of the national council. To every application of the sort, Geoffrey maintained the same lofty answer, that he should take his own time to decide. But, categorically as these demands and refusals were made amongst each other, they were still privately carried on between

these chiefs in the state; for it would have been dangerous to the seats of most of them, could the reflecting part of the people at large have even guessed at what was going on. The death of the royal child, if given up to the requisition of the just peering views of the Cromwell dynasty, Geoffrey foresaw would not be long of happening. But a third party, and a very important one too, in weight of character, sent the most conciliatory embassies to President Baldry; and at the head of this were some of those who had always been on the moderating side of the late contests; and who, in fact, had been the wishers for reformation, not revolution, and would now be glad to prepare a resource in the possible case of England desiring kingly government again, by rearing the young prince in the principles of a limited monarchy, established on the old constitution of Magna Charta. But to this, as well as to the two others, Geoffrey turned a haughty attention; for his game was to keep them all in a sort of awed, yet

hoping suspense, till he could indeed gain his point over Cromwell, by managing the reins he had in his hands; for, in truth, he was in the entire secret of that pretended republican's latent purposes; and he was resolved that if he did not share his possession of the object, he would circumvent him to the utmost limit of his life. And, just after a second visit, more daring than the other, by Falconberg, with threats of a capital charge of treason if he did not deliver up the boy, Betha, and the unconscious object of "all the coil that was made of him," arrived at Matchelowe Court.

They were brought in by night, but in a more secret manner than they had been taken away. Again that hearse-like vehicle, which had twice before passed over the greensward of the Bloomshaft field, tracked it. Betha then sate in that dark machine, and Benomi with her; their slight forms making but light load to the strong arms prepared at the bastion postern (it being no longer

occupied by military) to receive them from the travelling carriage, and bring them to the house, unknown to all within it. Geoffrey met the palled conveyance under the archway, that led from the field, by a slope upwards to the terraced lawn above. He opened the vehicle door, and, briefly saying to his daughter—"Betha, you have done well: abide patiently till I come to you," he took the prince by the hand, and silently drawing him towards him, threw his cloak over him, and immediately Betha heard their steps ascending the terrace slope. Her heart sickened at this beginning; but she felt the impropriety, if not the positive danger, of uttering a word in question of those who stood mutely near her; and with fervent though unuttered prayers to Him alone who can save, for the safety of that hapless and to her most endeared child, she tremblingly awaited her father's return. In about a quarter of an hour her vehicle door was opened again, and Geoffrey led her out. His cloak was now thrown over her, and si-

lently they hastened to the house. She saw no one when they entered, and at once he conducted her to her apartment. It was lit up, and all things were prepared for her refreshment, and her rest afterwards. He seated her, for her limbs were failing their support. One glance, in the light, at his face, had appalled her with dreads she knew not how to embody; but his countenance bore evidence that the sternest thoughts were then dominant in his mind: not a trace of its former usual smiling complacency was there; the whole man being, in fact, abandoned to the purpose of his one design, — to gain his object with Cromwell, or to sap or hurl him to destruction. The character of these resolves was stamped on every rigid furrow of his haughty brow; and after telling Betha that he had heard from her recent conductor from Malvern the whole account of what had happened to her party, before and during her stay there, and that he approved her conduct, he informed her, that none of the servants

in the house would be permitted to see her that night, he having forbidden them, on plea of her over-fatigue, even to offer their attendance; and adding that it was his wish she should keep her apartments entirely till he gave her leave to do otherwise, he bade her good night.

Thus was he impatiently quitting the room, when Betha, unable to smother the feelings that her disappointed anxiety awakened, rose hastily to follow him, and, weak in frame, slipping down upon her knee, she caught his cloak, and falteringly asked, "But Benomi, sir! where is he?"

"He is where he will be taken care of," was the immediate answer, but with the austere addition: "Betha, you have done your duty, in one respect. Do not mar it by foolish questioning of me, or any one. Be satisfied that there is not a power on earth which shall take that boy from my possession, till I choose to give him as my means of vengeance!" Geoffrey had not meant to say the extent of what he said; but the proud con-

sciousness of the power being then in his hand, overshot his customary caution; and he quitted the room, leaving an image on his daughter's mind, fearful afterwards to memory.

He went from her to despatch a messenger to Cromwell, then on his triumphant march to London, with a definite letter to this purpose,—that if he did not return to him, by the same courier, an explicit and full assent to all his after-named demands, the contested prize should be disposed of accordingly; and the leading one was, "that he, Cromwell, must pledge himself, without possibility of retraction, to verify his former engagement to give him, Geoffrey Baldry, Mariam Cromwell, his daughter, to wife." And he supported this claim, by the cogent reminder, that "if he could not command a woman, his own daughter, to make herself the seal of such a bond as that between her father and his best friend, he would prove himself a most untrustworthy lord over the wills of resolute men!"

He then briefly noticed, that should Cromwell act according to his former compact, he knew the friend he would secure by it, and that the *object of contention* should be instantly put into his possession, without a question of *Wherefore!* But on the reverse, should he receive even a hesitating answer, for it must be positive yea, or be treated as nay —he would dispose of the boy to the side most likely to honour his resentment; and he would moreover so unmask Cromwell's most secret machinery of action, in which he knew there were many points of hideous mystery between them, which, if they sunk the discoverer, would also level his adversary to the pit of perdition, in the estimation of all true commonwealth-men. Geoffrey therefore felt that as he had now set at nought even his own character, rather than not take amplest vengeance on his perfidious coadjutor, that Cromwell would not dare to brave the threatened alternative.

As for Mariam herself, if Geoffrey ever preferred her as a woman, he detested

her now, as one of the willing agents to put his high pretensions in the background; but he determined that she whom he had once chosen to exhibit to the world as his accepted proof of honour from the man to whom all England looked with homage, and whom Europe considered with a degree of wonder, should not be taken from him to be transferred to another:—"I abhor her, and I hate her father, for the usage both have presumed to cast upon me; but I will marry her; I will humble her to my footstool;—and yet her father shall find room for me on the seat beside him!—ay, and above him, as my star shall rise!—for nothing under heaven shall now cheat me of my full meed of that for which he, and all of us, have thrown our last die!"

He sent off this despatch from his house in West-Cheap, at day-dawn the next morning after the poor contested victim had arrived at Matchelowe Court; and some time during the following night he expected its conclusive reply. Meantime, in consequence of the known near

advance of the premeditated sovereign of them all, whether his title were to be king, dictator, or protector, renewed applications were pressed upon Geoffrey by the heads of the two parties, so necessarily opposing themselves to the no longer suspected aims of the victor; for he came on, in a personal array of grandeur that British monarch never had assumed. Widdrington, who pleaded for the young prince being given up openly to the Parliament, to be educated on the constitutional principles proposed, came himself that day to Geoffrey, with arguments which only the real patriot could dictate, and which the affected patriot cannot understand, for he has nothing within that can interpret the language. Geoffrey treated them with the smiling contempt of a man satisfied with his own wisdom, towards the weak theories of a visionary, and peremptorily, but politely, he repelled the parliament's claim on his prisoner: his decisive answer he would give, perhaps, on the morrow; but his

time must be his own! And so he and the worthy knight civilly parted.

But when Bradshawe closeted himself with him that same afternoon, and with all the force of his athletic mind grappled with the subject, he soon saw that cogent argument was not the thing needed here; and then he had recourse to attacking his passion-possessed coadjutor, in every possible way by which he thought his haughty selfishness could be moved, assuring him of not merely the reverence of the commonwealth, for putting into its hand so decisive a check over the soaring ambition of this conquering Cæsar, but also half the treasury itself, in ransom for what the true friends of the people must now preserve as a living bridle in the mouth of any meditating usurper.

Geoffrey, with a withering flash of scorn from his proud eye, at the concluding offer, rose from his chair:—"Bradshawe," cried he, "in that last base proposal, you have ruined your cause! There is only one Baldry that ever could

be made an instrument, by the dross you speak of! You mistake your man, if you suppose his name is Geoffrey! And instantly quitting the room, he told the servant in waiting, he would not be disturbed in the apartment to which he was going to retire, until President Bradshawe had left the house.

But Geoffrey could not pass from himself; he could not exclude the racking fiends, fiends of suspense, crowding within his bosom; and other fiends besides, urging him to the ruthless commission of the deed he expected, and hoped, the next sun would see him perform — the surrender of his confiding prisoner into the sole power of his most mortal enemy, — of a prisoner who, on the parole of his humanity to the grey hairs which had been denounced as his forfeit, should he even attempt to escape, had come back honourably to him, his former ward! For without being made aware that Betha knew who Benomi really was, Geoffrey had been told of her young companion having returned entirely of his own will.

Therefore, in the very face of this self-devotedness to the preservation of another, and as implicit a reliance on the good faith of his keeper for his own personal safety, Geoffrey could not but feel he was about to give up that noble child, that besought victim, into the clutch of of one who, he knew, would allow him but short passage to the grave:—"And there he will rest!" cried Geoffrey to himself, and so conscience said no more. But doubt, anxiety, towering ambition, impatience, and revenge, if disappointment should ensue, all were blowing the trumpet in his soul, and Geoffrey's spirit, in arms, could find no repose. His house in West-Cheap seemed too small for him to breathe in; his head felt loftily, as if the ceilings crushed it; and the sounds of the voices around him, and from the streets, were dissonant, all appearing to mock him, till he could be master of the answer that was to decide his fate. To abide in any given spot, awaiting its arrival, was impossible to the fever in his

veins; and mounting his horse when the dusk came on, he ordered that when the expected courier should appear, he must be conducted to him immediately at Matchelowe Court.

CHAP. XXIX.

No one in that vast old mansion but himself knew where he had disposed the prince; for the weeping Betha had been led to suppose he was transferred to the Tower:—but it was to the dungeon-like sacristy, secured by his own double-locked apartments, that Geoffrey led the boy on the night of his first arrival: hence, as his keeper alone was aware of his existence there, he only could convey to him the nourishment necessary to his life; and this night, when the proud hand that held him, drew out his little wallet, he did it with an exultation that deemed it the last time he was to perform an office so degrading. The corresponding thoughts would not allow him to remain long in contemplation of the innocent sacrifice that was to pur-

chase all he anticipated; but remorse was not one, and as he went forth from the chamber, he trod in air; — from gallery to gallery, and room to room, in that wide house he wandered — Betha's, indeed, he never approached: — but still all places there felt too narrow, too scant, for the mightiness of his presence. No being seemed in existence to him, but Geoffrey Baldry's self; the rest only living machines bowing before him, to give him conviction of his greatness. Yet a reverse did shoot across his mind — the possible thunderbolt of Cromwell's daring him to his worst. The agony of that thought was intolerable, and in this mood he strode out into the grounds to make the sky his roof, for the madness of his suspense and his pride was rending him asunder.

The night had been fine; but it began to gloom, and the stars and the moon to be seen only by snatches through the rapidly driving rack; but Geoffrey did not heed these changes: the working storm was within himself, and he roamed

from place to place, seeking a moment's quiet to his perturbed spirit, — but none would come. At last, he found himself strayed into the Bloomshaft field; and as he emerged from the terrace-arch, a sudden opening in the clouds threw a downward, full light on the field, tracking it, as if a trench of molten-silver divided it: on either side all else was dark. Just as he noticed the line of light, the shadow of a man entered its extreme edge, and then the man himself passed over it, and Geoffrey could discern him no more. However, he seemed evidently approaching towards the house; and its master, concluding him to be Cromwell's courier, hastened forward. Both heard the advancing steps of the other, — but only Geoffrey spoke.

"Well met!" said he: "you bring me news from the Lord-General?"

"Well met, indeed:" replied the answering voice. "I bring you news that may make an honest man of both of us: I bring you Bradshawe's *ultimatum*."

At this voice, and its declaration — for the speaker was his brother Leonard — Geoffrey uttered an imprecation; and drawing back in the fury of his disappointment, denounced his presumption, and the folly of Bradshawe in selecting such an agent. "But he shall have his meed," cried he.

"Nay," returned Leonard, "a truce till you hear me. Your own words conjured me — Bradshawe took your hint — and sent the only man who knew a Baldry's price. If so, I come the readier to try my lesson with him who first taught me how to coin myself."

"Leonard," interrupted Geoffrey, "this is premeditated insult! Had Bradshawe meant it otherwise, he would not have sent such a messenger: he knows that you have forfeited every bond of brotherhood on me, and then to brunt me with you thus! Tell him, that to-morrow I will send him my *ultimatum*."

"And why should I be your lackey, to tell him this or that," retorted Leonard, "if you will not hear me? But

hear me you shall, though I have forfeited your bonds of brotherhood! And how? — Ask yourself, how you squeezed the bonds I gave you, on my birthright, till you left me pennyless! Then I — but it matters not for myself — you shall hear me from Bradshawe, or the blood of a harmless child will sink you deeper in perdition. For you know well, if Oliver has the boy, he may go to mass that finds him above ground next morning."

"I know nothing that your Belial tongue dare imply," returned Geoffrey; "nor do I want counsel of your employer. Had he his wits, he would not — but I have not leisure now. Begone, Leonard; and hereafter I may forget this."

With the concluding words he moved haughtily away, as if to re-enter the arch. Leonard strode forward, and took him by the arm: — "Have you a mind your servants there, in brother Eustace's homestead, should benefit by my Belial tongue and yours? Stand where you are, if you mean to keep the measure of

your own loss and profit as closely cabineted between us as aforetime, and not spread it abroad, as you have done my auctioned name, from booth to market! for I will execute my commission from my employer, as you call him, though I should make every echo of that old dome ring for it!"

Geoffrey, foaming with rage, wrenched his arm from his brother's grasp, and throwing him from him, fiercely exclaimed — "Cry it, then, to the winds! and let them blow it to every point in England — I care not. You cannot measure yourself with me, — for all men know what Leonard Baldry is — therefore, the value of his evidence! Away! — it is dishonour to parley with such a braggart."

"Yes," returned Leonard, crossing his path, and in a tone of suppressed indignation, "when the time suits, I will away. But you have not banished me your worship's presence, in terms quite equal to your magnificence, and my deserts. My memory shall prompt you:

— Go! thou spendthrift, thou reveller, thou prodigal pawner of thy substance for riot and extravagance! True, those were my own wild vices — and their guerdon is upon me. Now come those of your breeding! Denounce them, then, lustily, for they must obey their master! — Away, thou beggar — thou bribed — thou bought — thou sold! — out of my sight, for I have made thee these! Yes, Geoffrey," cried he, clasping his arm again within his potent grasp, "you made me these! — and you must look to it."

"Villain!" retorted Geoffrey, "am I to be answerable for the vileness that may be dug up out of a nature's self-abandoned reprobate? Look to your own guilt — to your own present madness — and know, that I am not ignorant of your business on the coast: — a word from me would give you up to judgment!"

Leonard laughed a peal at this: — "Judgment!" exclaimed he. "What authority have you or your coadjutors,

who kicked down the laws of our merry England, to bind any man to the *ipse dixit* of your football?" If you think to do it, that bondman is not me. You are free to placard your knowledge at Paul's Cross, that I stumbled on the new cage of the poor old Juxton, and it pleased me to give him wing! Yes, Geoffrey," added he, with stern solemnity — and his brother could not recede from hearing him, he held him so tight — "I got my price for that too—and one more precious than the golden heap you showed me, to be the purchase of my first sin against my manhood! Did you not hire my sensual soul, wedded to the wassail-cup, and *the smiling leader down to death* that holds it, to go to that old man's former prison-house, and put him on the rack ye goodly commonwealth-men invented — and force him to give up the poor jewelled bequests, and disgorge the secrets of his dead master?"

"Unhand me!" cried Geoffrey, writhing in his clutch: "if you have courage in this base hypocrisy, you would stand

before me, man to man, and not hold me like a ruffian! — Release my arm!" cried he, with a second struggle, "or I have that with me shall compel you."

"Be it what it may," answered Leonard, firmly, "I will hold you thus, till you hear, on this very spot of your iniquity and mine, what you made me then — what you might make me now! In the hour I rode out from those old gates yonder, your and Cromwell's mammon-tempted emissary, I became a thing to be despised; I truckled to you for my own, the valuation of my conscience! and you dispensed it to me in doles, that you might hold me tethered to your heels to do your bidding; and I did it till I abhorred myself, and hated my hard task-masters. Geoffrey, you know this: your apples were of Sodom, and they choked me! I refused your last behest; and, since, have cut my food from every hedge except the poor man's. But I come to you, even as you say, man to man, to tell you, you have it in your word to redeem all to me! The

commonwealth will award me honourable means for honest life, if you will strike hands with Bradshawe and its true republicans now, and restore to them this boy — its living hostage against all intruders, whether from abroad or at home. Thus, then, you have my part of the profit for an act of honour: — And, for your own, brother Geoffrey, listen, and you will find it likely to brighten even the lustre of President Baldry's greatness." In making this pause, he withdrew his hand from his brother's arm. But Geoffrey, instead of meeting the conciliation of Leonard's latter sentence, let go the floodgates of the boiling wrath which had been raging within him during the recrimination of the rest of the speech; and with every term of hatred, contempt, derision, and defiance, contradicted all the charges he had made, and rejected every proposition of re-union with him, or with any who degraded themselves to be his partisans; whom, he said, were he further provoked, he would expose to the world, as the hirers of a

bravo, to compass their object by a ruffian violence on his person. "Be warned, then," cried he, with a haughty authority of tone, conceiving, by the silence and stillness with which Leonard stood and hearkened to these denunciations, that he was awed — "quit me, while my forbearance lasts! for it is not being the minion of John Bradshawe that can shield the man, a word from me to the Lord-Protector would send a galley-slave to Mexico! Beware, for I acknowledge no brother in you!"

"You do not, and your murderous answer has proved it!" exclaimed Leonard, in a voice of thunder; indignation bracing every nerve, while he again seized his opponent, but now by both his arms, to prevent his leaving him: — "You have sunk me to the pit of infamy, and you would keep me there! — Then, no brother be indeed between us! — and here, in your teeth, I tell you, that you lied, in denying your destruction of my better-self — in saying that I threatened you violence. Could I not, in this

very grasp, crush that false soul out of this dastard body? — but I disdain it. I go, Geoffrey, as you have dared me; I go to your colleagues — nay, to the whole commonwealth — all shall now judge between you and me." And, with the word, he threw Geoffrey from him with a force that cast him reeling on his knee; but in a moment he recovered his poise, and following on his brother just as he had turned to cross the field, he made a longe at his back with a dagger, which he had instantly drawn from his belt. "Miscreant!" cried he, in the act, "I will not be disgraced!"

But the stroke he intended failed, Leonard having looked round at the quick movement behind him, and discerning the glancing steel, while his brother's more than threat sounded in his ear, he recoiled a step or two backwards, and drew his sword; for Geoffrey, become desperate, continued to press upon him with his open dagger; but, holding his sword in guard only, Leonard, with

bitter scorn, called to him : — "That was a coward's deed! Away — lest I do indeed forget I am a brother!"

Geoffrey had no mind to answer, — his whole being was in tempest, and all driving to the one point — of annihilating the man who, by a breath, could overturn the high fabric of reputation he had been so long rearing by the subtlest art; and though his opponent had the stronger arm, he knew he was the experter swordsman, and, thrusting his dagger back into its sheath, he too drew his sword, determining that it should not find its scabbard again without its errand. Therefore, the flash of its glittering steel was the only reply given, while, with the keenness of a bloodhound, he pursued upon the retreating backward steps of his brother, and in an instant wounded him in the breast. Leonard now stood to his defence, but yet warned off his brother not to urge him too far.

Geoffrey answered only by his skilful arm; and Leonard, feeling himself struck a second time, and still pressed on with

increased ferocity, saw, if he meant to preserve his life, he must guard it by an equal attack upon his adversary, and the combat became terrible. Leonard found his blood gush at every turn, for Geoffrey's dexterous hand seemed to pierce him every where. At last, by a mutual furious thrust, their swords became locked at the hilts, and as the eyes of both glared on each other, while they stood in the track of moonlight, then traced with other hue by their receding and advancing steps in the mortal struggle of their mutual hatred, Geoffrey (who bled also, but not vitally,) slipped his free hand to his belt, and drawing out his dagger again, unobserved by Leonard, whose watch was necessarily on the lock of their swords, he made a treacherous thrust, under his sword-arm, at his brother, and the assassin's weapon entered to the hilt. Leonard staggered, and his sword dropped from his incapacitated arm; but in that moment vengeance rallied him, and throwing himself on his murderer, with the arm he yet could use

drawing his dagger — hitherto with him only custom's appendage — it drank at the heart of Geoffrey — and they fell in each other's death grasp.

"Geoffrey," cried Leonard, in a voice of mental agony, "what hast thou done to bring on this! May Mercy pardon us!"

"May blackest perdition be your doom! — bane of my life, and now its cursed destroyer! may fiends avenge me on the soul I cannot murder!" replied the infuriate Geoffrey; and even with his failing hand clutching at the dagger's head, he had left sticking in his brother's side, to repeat the blow; but in that instant of impotent and dire revenge, two figures stood by the brothers. Their shadows fell across the glazy, though yet discerning eyes of Geoffrey, and, maddened and aghast, he cried aloud — "Then ye are come! the fiends I called on! Let but my vengeance see him trampled to your lowest depths, and you may make me burn for ages!"

"Cease, profane wretch!" was the

horror-struck reply from one who bent over him: — "Who are you? And who is he that lies murdered by you?"

"Let him answer, if he can!" groaned Geoffrey: "I satisfy no human being more." And with a shivering shriek, that seemed a yell of something more than a corporeal pang, as if the earth had opened to his eye, on which he then turned his face, and showed its imperishable records against him there; his unnerved hands let go their hold on his brother's body, and he rolled in a horrible kind of convulsion on the grass.

The shock of the relapsing motion, for a brief while recalled the swooning senses of the expiring Leonard, then bleeding unto death; and hearing strangers over him, he murmured forth the words — "Whoever you are, for the love of Heaven make that man tell you, ere he dies, where he has incarcerated the boy Henry Stuart. I ask it not for my own sake — and yet I do. O! Geoffrey," cried he, dragging himself towards his groaning brother, — "before hell opens to receive

us both — seek mercy of your Redeemer — and give account of where that miserable child may be found!"

"No!" screamed the other, "not if it would save you one torment of the murderer's eternal flames! He shall perish, to double your damnation!"

The tongue of one of the bystanders clove to the roof of his mouth on hearing these things, and his senses reeled. Did he then see his two uncles, Geoffrey and Leonard Baldry, lying thus before him, destroyed by each other's hands! And how fearful seemed the mysterious cause of their mutual combat, and perpetuated dying hate, at least from one! Arthur threw himself on his knees beside them; and, in a voice of answering horror, announced who he was, conjuring both, or whichever could yet speak, to indeed make their peace with their offended God, by delaying no compensation in their power for evil done; and, particularly, he implored Geoffrey to accord with his dying brother's prayer, and con-

fess where he had hidden the innocent victim of so many injuries.

Geoffrey looked up:—"How came you here?" cried he. "You are Eustace's son—and you do not curse me! But I am cursed—for here I lie—and on the ground I coveted.—O! it has been Naboth's portion to me! Arthur, move that body from my sight—and I will tell you where you may find the boy; but, first, swear to me that you will take him over sea. No man in this land must profit by his life or death!—Swear!"

On this double and most frightfully agitated demand, Arthur placed himself so between the two expiring brothers, as in some measure to conceal the younger from the other's eye, and then made the solemn promise required.

While he was uttering it, Geoffrey drew a key from his vest; and, motioning his nephew to stoop to him, he put it into his hand, and in a few whispering, gasping words, told him the prison-

chamber of the child. "But I have a daughter!—" abruptly exclaimed he, as if that last one act of human feeling had opened his soul to some touch of parental tenderness: and the tone of that ejaculation did carry the appeal of a father in it. Arthur, with pious energy, now breathed a vow of consolation to the anxious parent — that, whether in this land or another, she should be cherished by him, and those he most honoured, as one of the dearest daughters of their blood!

But while he spoke, feeling the cold hand of Leonard wandering, as it were, over his kneeling limbs, as if to seek his attention for a moment, he bent to him, and his faltering lips murmured out — "Tell Geoffrey, I pardon him my blood — and I ask his forgiveness for having shed his to this mortal end — ere we meet before our Almighty Judge!"

Arthur repeated his dying uncle's adjuration; but Geoffrey raising himself with a start, as if another dagger had pierced him, cried out, "No, no, Leonard! we meet no more!" and, with that

horrid denunciation, he fell back prostrate — and his soul was gone! Arthur trembled to the inward man. Leonard groaned at the words he had heard; and when the voice and the life had seemed to cease together, he shook, as if by a power more potent than even death's hard partitioning. "Young man," cried he — "my nephew Arthur! — see what my youth's desperate course has brought upon me! And yet — O the counsel of the false ones! I have been a reprobate; but there is One who pardons the penitent, even in the last hour! And, more than for myself, as Mercy hears me! I call on Him for pardon on this my brother, whom my wretched hand has sent, all red with hatred of me, into our Maker's presence! Geoffrey — Geoffrey — is it come to this?" and he clasped the dead man's hand, all stiff with his own and his brother's blood.

Arthur, and Walter Burnet, who was with him, both now attempted to prevail on Leonard to allow them to move him thence; for, while any strength re-

mained, they pleaded that means ought to be used to preserve his life. "No," replied he—"my death's wound is in me; and blessed be Heaven it is! After what I have done here, what would life be to me? But mark me, thou generous son of the most confiding, the most injured of brothers! Did you not hear him, there, call this our death-plot *Naboth's portion?* — the envied portion! In that was poor Geoffrey's confession! Remember then the doom on such: a curse abides upon the coveted—and blood has marked it. See, where our footsteps have trampled down its grass, to dig our murderous graves! Oh, Arthur, cast stone off stone from such a home of horrors, and never let it be yours! Poor Bertha! As I die by her father's hand, she, perhaps, will not refuse me pardon, and her merciful prayers — Arthur, tell her so. And my brother Eustace — he can forgive this desolation, wrought by his father's sons! And there his Almighty Father will give him an eternal home for it. — But *the desire of the unjust must*

perish! — Remember —" Leonard had raised his hand, pointing upwards to the deep-set heavens beyond the driving clouds; but with the last sentence, dropping it again, he ceased to speak — to breathe — and all was still.

Arthur and his companion, without uttering a word on either side, stood for a few minutes motionless, gazing on the bodies. But after this solemn pause, in which the souls of those living witnesses felt as if even in the presence of Him, who then beheld face to face the spirits of the departed, the penitent, and the guilty! they instinctively dropped together on their knees, and both breathed out the prayer that had been taught by the Divine Pleader for all men — "Lord, be merciful to them, for they were sinners!"

CONCLUSION.

When the twain rose from their devout position, they found a third person added to them, and who was rising also from the same religious attitude. It was Hugh, the gardener's son, who, chancing to be in the field, near the terrace-wall, when the brothers met, had heard all that passed between them, and seen it too. Terror of Geoffrey's anger, first, and afterwards of the combat itself and its consequences, had kept him standing in under the shadow of the wall, until this moment, when he came forward to offer his evidence to him, he found was his old master's son, of all that he had witnessed before the appearance of himself and friend on the fatal spot. For Arthur and Walter, after tracing the arrival of Geoffrey's daughter to Matchelowe Court, were merely crossing their well-known

haunt, the Bloomshaft field, to explore what might be learned of her young companion from the venerable pensioner, and Gervase himself, when the clashing of swords there brought them to the dreadful scene of the catastrophe.

Arthur, when he heard all, felt the greater necessity to perform promptly his duty to the living; and, having given some requisite directions to Walter, and also to Hugh (whom he had recognised with a warm heart), he saw the lifeless bodies of his two kinsmen borne decently between the young men into the recess under the terrace-arch; and there laid, side by side, behind the fatal hearse-machine, on a heap of withered autumn leaves, and with the machine's mouldering pall thrown over them. Hugh closed the door of the place, and locking it, took its key with him. Both the young men then parted to their relative trusts; and Arthur hastened, by the private passages he knew, to the secret entrance of the sacristy. Anxiously he opened its double doors, and entered. Geoffrey,

however, had been true in this; for here he indeed beheld the disputed victim, the boy Henry Stuart; and just as Betha had seen him on the same spot some weeks before, leaning by a table, pale and sorrowful. He rose, even paler, at the sight of a stranger; but the voice of the cavalier, which he instantly recognised, and a few words from him, soon changed the whole aspect of his countenance. Arthur did not reveal what had happened; but he said that he came to take him to liberty and to happiness—to his royal mother—to his brother; and, with them, he told him, he would find the good bishop safely sheltered, for whose life he had so often pledged his own. The young prince's first answer was to Heaven. He knelt, and poured out his gratitude in words and tears. He then rose, and Arthur made him the fittest messenger to Betha, to inform her that she must become his companion again in a long travel; that her father had willed it so; and that Arthur de

Matchelowe was to be the conductor of both that very night.

No change of circumstances could appear incredible in those times. And when Betha found her arm in Arthur's; and that Benomi, her beloved Benomi, (for it was himself she prized, not his name, any way) smiling, gladsome, supported her steps on the other side, as they hurried down the treeless avenue to a carriage there, all seemed a dream to her. And when, after an hour's almost silent drive — for the spirits of all were bound up in wondering meditation, though neither the young prince nor Betha were aware of the awful part which occupied the thoughts of their resumed protector — she was the more amazed, at a sudden communication from Arthur, that they were passing through Brentford to Boston-house: for he bore credentials to Sir Thomas Fairfax, its present possessor, which would yield them every necessary hospitable sanctuary till he could accomplish his plan for removing his precious charges over sea. The next

instant the carriage rolled into the old gates of the mansion; and, on its drawing up to the great door, Fairfax himself stood there to receive her, and to take her out, even as a father would have greeted a child.

But the scene that met her in the large family room of that venerable abode of true patriotism, drew grateful tears of increased astonishment from her eyes.— Fairfax and his noble lady received Benomi as their prince. They kissed his little hand, and seated him when every one else stood around. But that was not all;— Gervase and the veteran pensioner were brought by the latter's son, in a conveyance of the good General's. And when they came into the cheerful, the hospitable chamber — the sacred asylum of all they so loved and honoured — affection and loyalty contended in the breasts of those humble faithful ones; but man's best nature prevailed, and they hastened to Arthur and to Betha first; for they had not seen her since her return to Matchelowe Court. The son of

their distant benefactor embraced them both with almost a filial reverence.— Betha pressed their hands in hers, but she could not speak. And for the young Henry Stuart, when they approached him, and would have bent to him as their prince, with weeping words of loyal memories;— he rose, and bursting into tears, of mingled sources too, he gently exclaimed, "I am happy—I am grateful—but royalty is not here! You must love me as one of yourselves only, and not bow venerable age to my poor little shadow of my brother's dignity!" and then he kissed the foreheads of the two old men—and would not sit again till all took their usual places, and treated him as if he were still Benomi.

But his sojourn under that roof was not long. By an extraordinary coincidence, or rather providence, Fairfax (determined not to witness the proud triumph of Cromwell into London) had prepared a vessel at the mouth of the Thames, to set sail with himself and family that night for the French coast.

And accordingly, before the passing of another hour, the friendly walls of Boston House no more echoed with the cheerful voices it had welcomed. The whole of its guests (excepting the old retainers of Matchelowe, who returned with the faithful Hugh), and their host and hostess too, were on board the little yacht by the second watch after midnight; and the shadowy sea had them speeding on its waves, long before the rising dawn dimpled its waters with silvery brightness.

But who shall describe the solemn, the tender, the happy scene that hailed their landing—their arrival at the royal abode of Saint Germain's?—for Charles and his friends were already there. It was not a court, it was a home that greeted them. The widowed Queen clasped her young son, with the more than mortal joy she would have done had she received him, thus living, from the tomb in which she once believed him laid dead. And Sir Eustace and the Lady Aphra, when they embraced their brave Arthur again, and

his young brother Henry clung to his neck in fond endearment, they took Betha also to their heart. And, indeed, from that day, she found parents there, and fullest consolation for every remembered suffering: she was rich, rich in love, from all around; — for love was the wealth of that little court, and of her new and dearest home. Tranquil happiness was its atmosphere too: for Betha never knew the direful penalty that had been paid on the field of her father's fall; that she might find the peace he had forfeited, and be an adopted child, a wedded wife, in the family he had most injured.

And so sped on the time, till the restoration of the young King Charles to the throne of his ancestors, recalled that family also to the land of their fathers. But Sir Eustace never would see Matchelowe Court again: Arelby became his residence, and his brave son and beloved daughter, abided with him, and the rest of their honoured kindred there. For a

double reason, indeed, for her dear sake, Arthur could never bring himself to revisit the interdicted spot that had once been his earliest home. But he knew that a grave had been dug in the terrace-vault, into which he had first committed the bodies of the awful slain, and that there they had been finally deposited. He also knew, that during the lapse of the succeeding years, the deserted mansion had dropped into ruins, and gradually fell in masses over the unsuspected grave. But when England, resting in peace, ordered the rampart-works of rebellion to be erased, then he saw the full import of the terrific *remembrance* enjoined him there, completely verified:— the bastion and its bulwarks were taken down; and the ruins of the old manor-house, and of its mouldering terraces, were swept away also, till the whole tract became a large extent of green pastures;— leaving no vestige of the ancient mansion, or of its domains and history, excepting the remnants of the

old gardener's orchard-cottage; and the blood-scathed record of his descendant's tradition, stamped on the Field of The Forty Footsteps.

THE END.

London:
Printed by A. & R. Spottiswoode,
New-Street-Square.